ND MRS. BEWER

FROM THE EIGHTH GERMAN EDITION OF

PAUL LINDAU,

AUTHOR OF "HELEN YOUNG."

Translated by Mrs. D. M. Lowrey.

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PREFACE.

A critic in the *Vossiche Zeitung* has given his readers to understand that my story of "Mr. and Mrs. Bewer" has so many points of similarity with an interesting but, so far as Germany is concerned, a little known drama of Emile Augier, that I have really no right to claim my work as my intellectual property.

It is always an unpleasant thing to be accused of appropriating the product of another's labor, and particularly is this the case where one has the consciousness that his work is the product of conscientious and personal effort.

The critic did not categorically accuse me of plagiarism, but his insinuations were so strongly marked that many persons, including some to whose opinions I could not be indifferent, have been led to suppose that there might be some possible justification for the aspersion—a most natural result in view of the authoritative position occupied by the journal in question in all literary matters.

My accuser gives an outline of Augier's drama, "Le Mariage d'Olympe," which he says coin

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cides remarkably with the plan of my story; indeed, the agreement between the two works, in one point at least, extends to identity of expression. In both we find the phrase, "The duck returns to water." Now it does seem to me that our common use of a popular proverb ought not to discredit my statement that in writing my story I never thought of the Frenchman's play.

Likewise, I may perhaps have written, "A clap of thunder out of a clear sky," "Poor as a church mouse," or made use of some other and similar expression which a well-read critic would have little difficulty in proving had already appeared in the works of authors who have gone before me.

In drawing a picture of that mysterious power which draws a low nature from the height to which it has accidentally been raised back to its original baseness, it is most probable that I was influenced, not by Augier's drama, but rather by the philosophy of the old German proverb, "Set a frog on a golden stool and he'll hop straightway to his slimy pool."

Our critic, indeed, has overlooked very many points of resemblance between my story and those of other novelists which I am quite ready to acknowledge. For example, Klaus goes walking with Kathi just as Hermann did with Dorothea. Then think of the substance of my tale. He sees

her! She makes a deep impression on him at once! He approaches her boldly! A friend who wishes to bring him into merry company makes them acquainted. She is a poor, ignorant child and says "yes" to everything. It's really impossible to understand what he can see in her to admire. He is her superior in education, and after the climax he yearns for solitude and gives himself over to unedifying musings. Finally he leaves her. Now, when we come to think it over there is in this nothing different from the well-known history of Doctor Faust. We have only to change the names Klaus and Kathi and Leo, into Faust, Gretchen, and Mephistopheles, to make the parallel perfect.

The fact that "Le Mariage d'Olympe" is little known in Germany prevented the larger circle of readers from detecting the untruth of the calumny published against me, therefore I determined to justify myself by applying to the one man whose judgment all must consider authoritative. I informed Emile Augier of the accusation made against me, and asked him if he considered my work an improper appropriation of his. To my letter I received the following reply:

PARIS, March 22, 1882.

MY DEAR LINDAU: I have read your charming story of "Mr. and Mrs. Bewer" with the liveliest interest. When I say I have read it, I flatter myself. I ought rather to say I had it translated for

me, for you know very well my ignorance of modern languages. I was on the point of writing you a note of congratulation when I received your letter. You tell me that the critics declare your story to have reprehensible similarity with my play "Le Mariage d'Olympe." My astonishment is not less than yours. Your whole literary activity should have protected you against such a suggestion. But aside from that, what possible connection is there between the two works? What I had in mind was the morbid notion of the elevation and redemption of woman through love, which at that time ran riot through our French literature, and indeed made its influence felt to a certain extent upon our manners. I carefully defined the limits of my subject in my first scene.

"Then you are of opinion, Monsieur le Marquis, that there are no penitent Magdalens?"

"Oh, yes, there are, but only in the desert."

The whole play is but the development of this idea. Olympe is homesick for dirt, she is about to sell herself for a diamond necklace, and forgets in so doing that she already has an income of a hundred thousand francs.

She is prepared to throw off every restraint that she may return to her vices, when a pistol ball nails her fast to the threshold of the conjugal chamber.

Your subject, on the other hand, is a *mesalliance*, not of birth nor of property, but of education. A genuine, modern *mesalliance*, in which the differences are most difficult of accommodation. Your Kathi is no debased nature and has no past behind her which she must make good. As a married woman she was respectable, just as she had prob-

ably been a decent girl. The gulf which separated her from her husband was mental and moral inequality. This is a deep and entirely modern problem, upon which, I will say to you, I have myself done a good deal of thinking, and which I have long been intending to make the subject of an original work when the opportunity offers.

You will see from what I have written how little, in my opinion, there is of similarity between your story and "Le Mariage d'Olympe."

This letter ought to be a complete refutation of the accusations against you. Let them say and write what they will, and do you go quietly on your way.

I cordially press your hand.

EMILE AUGIER.

To these words I have only to add my hearty thanks to this distinguished writer and amicable correspondent. P. L.

BERLIN, March, 1882.

MR. AND MRS. BEWER.

CHAPTER I.

As he entered the back room of the famous Dressel restaurant, there was a sudden hush in the conversation which had been going on glibly enough before he made his appearance. The guests who were gathered around the "Stammtisch" threw surprised, questioning glances at the man who had ventured to intrude upon their privacy.

This little room, at the rear of a long and elegantly appointed suite, had its usual complement of guests, men who had assembled nightly within its walls, and who, because they were seldom annoyed by strangers in this their special sanctum, had grown to regard all new comers as interlopers.

It was simple, and comfortably furnished, and in sharp contrast to the glitter and light of those large rooms which either faced, or lay nearer, the street. Photographs of more or less celebrated actors and actresses hung on the walls, under

many of which Mine Host had written complimentary dedications. On the *etagère* stood a primitive collection of books, obviously for the use of the habitues of the room. Bets were settled now and then by a reference to this little library, which consisted of "Wolff's Household Treasury of Poetry," "Meyer's Smaller Lexicon of Universal Knowledge," "Statistics of the City of Berlin," "Buchman's Familiar Quotations," the Army and Navy List, three Gotha almanacs, and a theatrical calendar.

The waiter always greeted the guests by name or title, and, knowing the taste of each, catered to it without waiting for any order. The regular customers in turn acknowledged the man's presence with a careless nod or smile, or a "Here we are again, Ned!"

Any man who unwittingly strayed into this room was made to feel at once that he had made a mistake. There was a sudden hush and a look of expectancy from the occupants, as if they were waiting for the new comer to deliver his message and depart. Naturally, there was no message to deliver, but the stranger always retreated precipitately, with the conscious feeling of having gone far a-field of his moorings.

To-night, however, was an exception. The tall, strong man who had interrupted their talk seemed to suffer from no feeling of discomfort. He cast

an indifferent look toward those who were giving him such marked attention, then crossed the room and hung his broad straw hat on a hook, placing his heavy iron-bound walking stick near it; then, turning, he seated himself quietly at one of the little tables and ordered a bottle of seltzer water and a glass of cognac.

Ned, who was about to hand him a wine card, tossed it aside with a sarcastic expression of disillusion and disappeared to fill the modest order.

Not only in this little company would the stranger's appearance have been remarkable. He was an unusually large and handsome man. He must have stood fully six feet three, and his figure was in proportion to his height. He was, in truth, a young giant. Broad-shouldered, full-chested, with strong limbs, and large, but well proportioned, hands and feet.

The type of the great original of his race, with thick blonde hair, which he wore closely cropped, and a long, well-kept beard of like color, which reached down to his breast. His forehead was neither high nor prominent. His eyes were large, very large, and blue, and wore a good-natured expression.

The singularity about the man's face, which, in repose, reminded one of a Kaulbach head, was the contrast between the deeply sunburned skin and the golden hair and beard. He was past thirty,

of that there could be no doubt, but it was equally certain that he had not yet entered into his forties.

There was a few minutes pause in the conversation, and then it slowly began to flow again. But it took a different channel this time, and the voices were subdued almost to whispers.

It seldom happens that an intruder silences the majority which have been long in possession, but this young stranger, all unawares, commanded the attention of the half-dozen congenial fellows who were scanning him so critically. They made many shrewd conjectures concerning him. What might his name be? his country? his station in life? A newly issued libretto of "Lohengrin" lay near, and one of the men suggested that he was probably the new Wagner tenor, who was to assume the title rôle, and who would soon appear on the boards of the Court Theater. A second said he was a Brandenburg grandee, or an officer of cuirassiers minus his uniform. Another, a skeptical wretch, was convinced he was a lion tamer, or, at the least, the head of a menagerie.

The blonde giant could not fail to note that he was the cynosure of all eyes, but evidently he was accustomed to such surveillance and paid no heed to it. He took a large black cigar from the side pocket of his light summer coat and lit it leisurely. Then he drank his glass of cognac and seltzer at one draught, wiped his mouth slowly

with his large silk kerchief, and pulled his long beard for a minute, after which he reached for an evening paper and leaned back comfortably in his chair to read and smoke. It happened to be only an advertisement sheet, devoted to the amusements of the city, but it seemed to satisfy him. He glanced over all the notices on one side and then on the other. Then he threw it aside, took the cigar, at which he had been puffing steadily, out of his mouth and laid it on the table, looked up at a clock, threw his right leg over the left, clinked on his glass and ordered more seltzer and cognac, and took up the discarded paper once more.

He had resumed his reading but a minute or two when a gentleman whose step and bearing bespoke the actor entered the room. The constant practice and exaggeration of mimicry had lined his face with deep furrows, and these were especially emphasized around the eyes and mouth. His profile was sharply cut and his eyes were unusually bright and sparkling. His dark, thick hair, well peppered with gray, hung in heavy locks on his high broad forehead. Leo Schneider had for years delighted his audiences in the rôle of a *bon vivant*, but he was now on the eve of resigning such parts to younger men, while he assumed the *agenda* of the comical father. Evidently he was at home here, and greeted the com-

pany around the center-table with a smile and a wave of the hand as he crossed the room hastily to the stranger.

"Have you been waiting long?" he asked, extending his hand; and, without waiting for a reply, he continued, "It beats the devil! Berlin's as quiet as the grave! I've just come from a dozen doors, all bolts and bars. That you should happen here in the month of August of all months in the year! Well, you'll just have to take pot luck with me and my friends. There isn't even a cat at home."

"I'm sure I don't care," answered the giant. "It doesn't matter to me. Sit down!"

"Hadn't we better join the others?" with a nod toward the Stammtisch. "They are all acquaintances of mine, and pleasant fellows."

"As you please."

The two stepped over to the table and Leo Schneider introduced his friend as Herr Klaus Bewer from Sumatra.

"Of Lübeck," corrected Klaus, "of Lübeck! I don't want people to think that that cursed Sumatra is my home, for I haven't the slightest desire ever to see the place again."

Schneider related with wonderful volubility how much he had been surprised at receiving a visit from his old friend, Klaus Bewer, that afternoon. He had imagined the wild animals had

torn him to pieces long ago, or else he had succumbed to the fearful climate. When, lo and behold, the old fellow appeared before him, just as amiable as ever, not changed a whit in these last ten years, "except that he's broader shouldered and more sunburned; his beard, too, has grown a finger longer, but still he's the same old Klaus, for he hadn't been talking to me ten minutes until he asked abruptly where one would be likely to find a pretty wife! And here was he, Leo Schneider, his true friend, who had never forgotten the jolly hours they used to spend together in Lübeck, and now, though he had searched the city over, he couldn't get a gay party together for that night. All the birds had flown; the little fairy from Friedrich Wilhelm's city, the great Y. from Knoll, the heavy Z. from Wallner —all away; one to the baths, another to Potsdam, a third to the mountains. Klaus would form a deuced fine opinion of Berlin!"

So Leo rattled on, all in the same quick time and with the same amiability and animation. The gentlemen listened attentively and encouraged the speaker to continue by laughter and well-timed observations. They laughed at anything, as they called on Ned for fresh supplies of *sec.*, and comported themselves generally as if this were the jolliest evening they had ever known. In a word, they were in the rosiest of humors.

Klaus was much amused. He lighted his third cigar and drank his fourth glass of champagne. He smiled good naturedly, and answered readily all questions concerning his life in the tropics. Schneider, who grew merrier and more loquacious at each glass, related with much laughter and many amusing interruptions the whole story of his friend's life. And so it happened that the man who had entered the room a stranger and unknown, at seven o'clock, and been eyed askance by its inmates, had at nine o'clock scarcely a secret from them. They knew the whole history of his life.

Klaus Bewer was the third son of an honorable senator, merchant, and ship-owner, Jacob Bewer, of Lübeck. He had four brothers living—in this number was included the youngest, Gottlieb, nicknamed the Dwarf—and one sister, Elise, who was married to a clergyman and lived in Holstein.

The two elder brothers, who had married during his long absence from home, had succeeded to their father's business. The fourth had established himself in San Francisco, and Gottlieb, who was the student of the family, had recently been appointed a tutor in the University of Greifswald.

With his two elder brothers, quiet, industrious workers, Klaus had never been in sympathy; neither had his manner of life appealed to them. For Gottlieb, who, while yet a child, had with-

drawn himself from the family circle in order to pursue his studies, Klaus had a feeling of mingled superiority and commiseration; the sister, too, had become estranged by reason of her early marriage and departure from the home circle. So that the only warm relations which he had were with his brother Wilhelm, who was three years his junior, and who was the best-natured and most thoughtless of the Bewer sons.

This brother had, while yet very young, been guilty of a grave offense, and old Herr Bewer, who was not a man to be trifled with, and who had striven to mold his children's characters by careful education and severe moral training, wasted no words on him. He paid all his debts, and then summoning him into his august presence handed him one hundred thalers in coin and a draft for six hundred dollars, which sum would be paid to him in monthly installments, of fifty dollars each, by S. B. Sterne & Sons, bankers, of New York.

The father parted from his son on the ship with the words, "Wilhelm, you can look out for yourself now! You will never receive another thaler from me as long as I live; and if you do not do better for the future, I will see that you have nothing over which to rejoice when my will is read!"

Nevertheless things went well with Wilhelm in the hard school of the new world. He did not

write home for a long time; but when he sent his first letter he was already head of a branch establishment in the West, to which position he had been assigned by the New York house with which he had connected himself immediately on his arrival in America.

The only one of the brothers who suffered from this separation was Klaus. He had many traits in common with his brother Wilhelm—the same kind-heartedness, the same imprudence.

The hours which he passed in the counting-room became almost unendurable after Wilhelm left. He could scarcely support the sight of the aggressive and aspiring clerk who sat opposite him at his brother's desk. He never breathed freely until the hour for closing struck.

Then he would hasten to his room and make an elegant toilet, in which to appear a little later, with surprising regularity, in the same box at the theater, surrounded by the same set of young men, night after night. Young men who, like himself, belonged to wealthy and influential families. What the stage had to offer was a matter of little moment to him. It had become part of his life to spend his evenings at the theater.

As a regular attendant, who sometimes gave wine suppers to the actors, or sent flowers or other trifling gifts to the actresses, and was always liberal with cigars, he stood high in favor with

the manager. Then he was a *distingué* looking young man, who, in his turn, attracted attention to his box as well by his striking appearance as by regular attendance. During the second act he was permitted to go behind the scenes, and after the play was over he supped regularly with the play-actors in their so-called artists' salon.

He thoroughly enjoyed the noisy gayety of these nightly meetings, and his weariness of the counting-room, especially after his brother's departure, was more strongly emphasized in consequence. It was from about this time that his acquaintance with Leo Schneider dated.

When the theatrical season closed and his histrionic friends were scattered in all directions by the four winds of heaven, Klaus was overwhelmed with a frightful feeling of loneliness. He knew not what to do with himself and his time. He became sadly discontented. He grew each day further and further away from his severe, taciturn father, who regarded his son's purposeless existence with growing displeasure; with his brothers he had no intercourse whatever. Wilhelm had gone and Gottlieb was always shut up in his own rooms with his books. There came to him one day the determination to solve all doubts and difficulties which beset his mind by tearing himself free from the tie which bound him to his home and go out into the world, as his brother

had done before him, to seek his fortune for himself.

He had a long and earnest conversation with his father, the first in years.

He spoke with great frankness of his recent life. He spared himself no reproof. In conclusion, he said, "I am perhaps ungrateful, but I dare not act the hypocrite before you; I am not satisfied here; I am not happy! I have no interest in the business, and what I do, I do without pleasure, merely because it is forced upon me. Each day I become more discontented and idle. Perhaps it is because everything is too easy for me. This passing one's life at a desk—it doesn't do for me, father. I long for free air, and for an active life. I must get away! Here I'd sleep my life away. Soon there'd be no vitality left! If we were at war, I could enter the army; but now that peace with Austria is assured, and the North German confederation has endured for two years, there is no prospect of war, and for garrison life I have no fancy. I am twenty-five years old. Let me go across the ocean for five years—or longer, if necessary. I will work, and strive to make a man of myself. Here I am neither a comfort to you nor a pleasure to myself."

Old Jacob Bewer admitted that his son was right. He furnished him liberally with all the funds necessary for a long journey and a season

of idleness at its termination, and four weeks after their conversation he pressed his boy's hand silently as he parted from him. The tears stood in the old man's clear blue eyes as he watched the train steam out of the station, and he spoke no word that day to any living soul.

Klaus took the direct route via Marseilles to Singapore, in which city he remained but a short time. He had made the acquaintance on shipboard of a Hollander who had great possessions in Sumatra, and the latter's stories concerning the hard, toilsome life there had great charms for the man who was fleeing from indolence.

In February of the year 1869, Klaus settled in Sumatra. A hard, toilsome life opened before him. But that was just what he wanted. He received a certain sensuous pleasure from the very exhaustion of his laborious, active life. To be weary even to sleep at times was a new and pleasant sensation. He felt he was living at last.

He directed the work of the lowest menial in his employ and he himself worked for three. He defied the heat and the unpleasantness of the climate. He was looked upon by the Europeans as a wonder and by the natives as a being from a higher sphere, whom they ventured to approach only with great humility. He made a study of the fundamental principles upon which many of the peculiar customs of the country rested, and

was, in a comparatively short time, a far-sighted and capable merchant, on whom all his fellows looked with great and ever-increasing respect. His business grew and prospered and by the end of his fifth year he had amassed a considerable fortune.

He was on the eve of winding up his business in Sumatra in order to return home, when he received a short and characteristic letter from his eldest brother, announcing the death of old Jacob Bewer after a short illness.

Klaus was very deeply affected by this intelligence. It came home to him now, for the first time, how much he had loved the old man, and that it had been nothing else than a strong, unspoken desire to see his father again which was urging him to turn his face homeward as soon as might be.

Mingled with his grief was a bitter feeling of resentment against his elder brothers, who, in the settlement of his father's estate, had indeed taken great advantage of the absence of Klaus and Wilhelm, and the inexperience of the scholar Gottlieb, for their own gain. While the material injury which had been done him was a matter of indifference to him, he felt keenly the unbrotherly behavior and the want of heart as well. He vouchsafed his brother no reply. The next mail to Europe took with it instructions from him to his

legal adviser at Berlin, Felix Quintus, to protect his interests and to divide his share of the inheritance, in three equal parts, between his sister in Holstein, Wilhelm at San Francisco, and the young scholar at Greifswald.

With all his strength, with an almost feverish passion, Klaus plunged once more into business, and the more he worked the stronger grew his greed for gain. It became the one object of his life to amass a great fortune. An unnatural joy grew upon him as his possessions increased, and if ever man succeeded, Klaus Bewer did. Wider and yet wider grew the basis of his undertakings, wider and still wider the circle of his colossal business, until his fortune was immense. In a few years he had far outstripped all competitors. He was the head of a house with branches in all the capitals of Europe.

He established a household, the pomp and magnificence of which a prince might envy. He had an army of servants, stables filled with race horses of blood stock, and the best cook in the East. The natives called him "the king," and kingly indeed was his magnificent residence with all its surroundings, kingly also the hospitality which he dispensed. But in the midst of all this wealth and power which his own hands and brains had created, the cry ever echoed in his soul, "If my father had but lived! The knowledge of what I

am, of what I have accomplished, would have rejoiced the old man's heart, and my elder brothers would have been compelled, at least, to witness his happiness."

Now he was rich, richer than he had ever hoped, richer indeed than he even cared to be. It required but a proportionally short time for him to realize that his wealth brought him no real pleasure. In his heart he was always asking himself the fateful question, "What joy do my possessions give me? and when I double them or treble them, as I may do, will they make me any lighter hearted? will they not add a pang to my present restless pain?"

He, whom they called king, found his jeweled crown weighed as heavily as though it had come to him by divine right.

He had lived among strangers in a strange land for ten years; he was thirty-five years of age; he had accumulated great treasure; but he was alone. A melancholy longing took possession of him—a longing for the old associations of home, for the Lübeck beer gardens, for renewed intercourse with the actors and actresses of long ago; a longing for a hearty German laugh, for German sounds, for German music. He was a passionate lover of music. He had no specially refined taste, no musical education whatever, but the *Volkslieder* of his native land and its waltzes stirred

him to his very soul. What would he not give at this very moment to hear a waltz from Johann Strauss or a sentimental song! And he sighed deeply as he murmured, "Oh, if it were but possible!"

It was a clear bright day, the first Sunday in May, and the spacious room in which the merchant sat was shaded by many draperies and Venetian blinds to exclude the sun's piercing rays. In his mind's eye he could see his townspeople, at this very hour, with their wives and children streaming forth from the old city gate to the great beer garden to listen to the military band playing the latest *potpourris* or the catch songs from the newest operas. There they were, all clad in their Sunday best, sauntering through the walks in twos and threes, or chattering and laughing together as they kept time to the music with the clink of their glasses. Ah! these people did not realize what a pleasant life they led, while he, the princely merchant, must sit alone and disconsolate in semi-darkness, in order to protect himself from the blinding, scorching rays of a tropical sun. There was no dance music for him! The meanest tradesman clutching his entrance fee to the garden was happier than he who could pay for fifty bands. The artisan got something out of his life; he could enjoy his holiday, could meet his friends, could go home, and, above

all, could hear the sound of his beloved German tongue and reply in the same language.

He started up with an exclamation. He would see his own people again; he would turn his back forever on these *piebald* Asiatics. What could he gain by longer residence in this cursed place?

He could fulfill every desire, even though he were ten times more extravagant then he really was. For the last ten years the word "Fatherland" had been no more than an empty sound in his ears; now the thought of his forsaken country sent the blood rushing to his heart. He was tired, tired to death of his present life, tired of the rabble with whom he associated, tired of the peddler's French which was everlastingly sounding in his ears.

On the next morning, Klaus surprised his head manager with the announcement that pressing business called him at once to Europe, and that he wished to dissolve all business ties in Sumatra, no matter at what sacrifice, at the earliest possible moment.

He intrusted the weary work of liquidation to his conscientious and energetic clerk and the next steamer which left the island carried with it Sumatra's German "King."

Klaus made no unnecessary delay on his homeward journey, and in the last days of July he landed on the pier at Marseilles. Paris detained

him but three days, and on August 1st he set foot in Berlin. At Stendal, a Berlin paper had been thrown into the coupé; in glancing through it, Klaus read the announcement of a theatrical performance which was soon to be given for the benefit of the family of some deceased actor, and to his great joy found that Leo Schneider, director of the Court Theater, had the whole matter in charge.

Surely this was his old friend, Leo Schneider—in his day the pride of the Lübeck Theater! Klaus laughed. He remembered suddenly that Leo owed him five thalers, which he had lent him at the railway station, a subvention which was made necessary because Leo had imagined the agent had paid for his excess of luggage, and not until the last moment did he discover his error.

The memory of this trifling occurrence seemed to bridge over, at one stroke, the wide chasm between that far away past and the reality of the present. Klaus felt suddenly as if he were a German on German soil once more. He had no difficulty in obtaining Schneider's address from the porter of the hotel, and as soon as he had refreshed himself and made some changes in his attire he started forth from the Kaiserhof in search of his friend.

He found Schneider, in light and careless attire, stretched out at full length on a couch, studying

after a dilettante fashion the rôle in which he was to appear on the next night but one at the benefit. The greeting on either side had been hearty and noisy. Leo had found, as he had related to the company around the Stammtisch, his friend altogether unchanged, with the single exception that Klaus seemed friendlier than before. Klaus laughed long and loud from very contentment, and thought involuntarily of the five thalers and of Leo's painful surprise when he was informed no payment had been made for his luggage.

So the wanderer had come home to begin life again. Had he come to enjoy himself? to be amused? Well, he had come to the right place, and Leo would be his Mentor. Berlin was no longer the weary hole of former times, with its gloomy interiors, high houses, and endless lengths of dirty streets. Now it was a great city, with the life of a little world ebbing and flowing within its boundaries. Here he would find an environment of luxury which encircled everything! The houses, the entertainments, the toilets were not one whit behind those of Paris and London; the dinners which were given by the great commercial magnates had nothing to fear from comparison with those given by the Parisian millionaires; and what more need be said! But why ramble on; Klaus would see it all for himself! He could

form no idea of the noise and hubbub going on in certain quarters all night long. The boulevards of Paris could show nothing finer. Added to that, the city was a wonder of cleanliness and health and beauty now. The asphalt pavements, the canalization, the zoölogical garden, the park, the surface cars, the Vienna cafés! He would not say too much, but Klaus would be astonished! In order to properly kill the fatted calf for the return of this prodigal son, he would arrange at once a pleasant party for that very evening.

They would meet at Hiller's or Dressel's, and after their supper have a drive in the park for an hour, if so disposed. At any rate, Klaus was to be at Dressel's at seven sharp.

The carrying out of this program, was, as we have seen, foiled by the absence of Schneider's friends from town, but as Klaus sat at the table sipping his champagne and laughing at his friend's witty sallies he felt no lack in the evening's entertainment.

The conversation took a quieter turn after nine o'clock, when, one after another, the men rose, and, excusing themselves, departed. Leo had hopes of keeping them together for the whole evening, but it required a greater influence than he exercised to counterbalance the attractions of a great city.

"Good Heavens!" he cried, starting up, "we can not spend our whole evening here, drinking

sec and telling stories! We must do something! Ned, give me the amusement sheet."

"How about the Walhalla?" asked Klaus. "I looked over the list of amusements while I was waiting for you, and their program promises much—acrobats, velocipede riding, ventriloquists, and ballad singers."

"The Walhalla! That'll do. Why didn't I think of that before? Great exhibitions of high art, fine specimens, the only really choice place in the city—as well there as anywhere!"

He looked at his watch. "Quarter past nine, we're just in time. Ned, call a fast stepper—first-class. Move lively now! Come!"

CHAPTER II.

Klaus was by no means so *blasé* as might have been expected from so old a traveler. He enjoyed the neck-breaking performances of the acrobats, and the sprawling and straining of the india-rubber men, with all the naïve astonishment of the provincial.

The artists on the stage interested him much more than the people in the boxes to whom Schneider was constantly directing his attention.

"Look at that thin young man opposite us! That one with the little felt hat and the gray coat! More to the right—just opposite us! That one, the dark one, I mean! He's Prince Demeter Strusa—a Roumanian, in our dragoons. He's a wonderful rider and the swell of his regiment. At present he's the adored or adorer, just as you please, of that little actress just coming on—at least so I have been told! I don't know her myself, but that's no matter, I can introduce her just the same if she strike your fancy."

"Who—who is she?" asked Klaus suddenly, picking up his program, which he had not consulted until now.

A beautiful girl had just come down the stage. Her toilet was extravagant and bewildering in the extreme. Unlike that of which any fashion, any country, any season, any epoch, had ever seen or heard. The young singer wore a short, a very short, petticoat of pale blue satin, the skirt was cut in very deep slashes and showed her superb figure at greater advantage than was perhaps in accordance with extreme modesty. The bodice was trimmed and laced with blue and silver hussar cord, and edged around with swan's-down.

A bouquet of roses of unusual size was pinned upon her left breast. Her small and shapely feet were incased in boots, of the same shade and material as the gown, with high red heels. She wore a coquettish cap, quaint in design and made of scarlet velvet, and she carried a fan of dark blue feathers. The whole costume was as *outré* and outlandish as possible, and yet, notwithstanding this, the girl was as lovely as a dream. She had an interesting face; her eyes were deep fathomless brown, and her luxuriant hair a brown-black, while her eyebrows were strongly marked, and her mouth beautifully curved, with full, fresh, pouting lips. Evidently she made slight use of pigments. Her face had the same camellia-like color as her bosom and neck and her finely molded arms. Her figure was graceful and supple. Her carriage had a security and assurance

which almost amounted to defiance. Notwithstanding her many attractions, one had but to look at the program to see that "Kathi Schöne—Austrian and Hungarian songs," was not one of the stars at the Walhalla—her name was printed in modest letters far down the list.

"Who is it?" repeated Leo. "I don't know her name. She's one of the soubrettes. Kathi Schöne!" he added, referring to the program. "I am not acquainted with her, as I said before."

"A charming girl," said Klaus.

"Yes, she's a stunner!" said Leo.

While the orchestra was playing the prelude to a musical Viennese street song, Kathi stood composedly in the center of the stage near the prompter's box, and fanned herself, while she cast inquiring glances over the vast audience. She smiled several times, whether to show her teeth, or as a greeting to acquaintances, it was hard to tell. When her eyes rested on the Roumanian prince, however, she did not smile, but closed her eyes a second as if in silent greeting.

Klaus noted it all, and that dumb show of a secret understanding vexed him, he hardly knew why. He waited in vain to have her look toward him.

He moved uneasily in his chair, and finally leaned forward over the box, resting his face on his hands, while through his half-parted lips he drew long, deep breaths.

She sang a gay Austrian song. Klaus only understood a word now and then, but from what he could catch it seemed a glorification of the waltz, the genuine poesy of which had the true Viennese ring. She had an agreeable enough voice, though entirely uncultivated, and sang quite naturally, without effort, but with a certain roguishness and wantonness which captivated Klaus.

During the first part of her performance she bore herself like hundreds of other variety singers, keeping time to the music with her feet, bowing graciously in season and out, while she wielded her fan with a coquettish motion; but when she came to the gay refrain, new life seemed to awake within her, and a good-natured drollery spoke in every tone which came from her throat, in every glance from her sparkling eyes, and every motion of her slender figure. All of which added piquancy to her beautiful and singular appearance. The whole burden of the song was a ringing promise of unspeakable mirth and jollity.

The audience clapped as they had done for every other actress, but Klaus struck his broad palms together with such violence and continuance as to make his neighbors smile; and even Kathi, noticing the energetic demonstrations of the yellow-haired giant, directed a special and gracious courtesy toward his box. Klaus's inde-

fatigability, aided by the applause of the people in the pit, was rewarded by the singer's coming forward once more and giving them another song. Her face, which had hitherto been all smiles and sunshine, suddenly assumed a woful, melancholy expression, and in a trembling pianissimo she began the charming melody from Koschat's "Lamentation":

Forsaken, forsaken,
Forsaken, am I.
Like a flower sear and withered,
Deserted I lie.
My true love has broken
The oath which he swore;
And I am left weeping
With heart fraught and sore.

There was no note of applause now. Something in the words, or in the pleading voice, appealed to the hearts of the honest towns-people, who listened with bated breath.

Leo turned to whisper some careless word to Klaus, but the latter made a hasty movement to silence him as he did so. Leo gave him a surprised look, and then resigned himself with a sigh.

Kathi began her second verse now:

There's a tree in the green wood
Which blooms all the year.
There he promised to wed me,
Ere the winter was here.
There, heartsick and lonely,
I hide from the day.
And the mocking wind whistles.
Forsaken! for aye.

Kathi looked deeply unhappy, and her final words were almost a sob.

But as soon as the song was ended, she assumed her usual gladsome expression, and, bowing right and left, tripped lightly off the stage.

And now the audience applauded loud and long; she was recalled once, twice, thrice. She bowed and smiled with a deprecatory air, as if to say, "All this honor is quite undeserved"; and when the audience once more recalled her, she gave the orchestra leader a glance as much as to say, "I am not prepared to do anything more to-night." Klaus applauded still longer, but other performers came on and he had to resign himself.

"I'd have given a great deal to hear her sing that song again," he said to Leo. "What was it like? Forsaken—like a flower sear and withered —forsaken I lie * * * What a charming person she is, this Fräulein Schöne. I wonder if there would be any possibility of making her acquaintance?"

"Nothing easier," answered Leo. "I'll invite her to supper with us to-night."

"But will she accept such an off-hand invitation?"

"Why not?"

"It's too off hand. Still it would be a great pleasure to meet her."

Leo wrote a few words on his card, got an

envelope from an usher, and addressed it to "Fräulein Kathi Schöne. In haste," and sent it around to the dressing-rooms with an order to wait for a reply. The usher returned in a moment with the reply. Klaus bent curiously over his friend's shoulder to read the answer:

"Uterly impossible. Have made an engagement for to-night." Utterly was spelt with one 't.'

Klaus was greatly put out. A moment ago he had rejoiced, now his hopes amounted to nothing. There was no reliance on these soubrettes. They were all the same. He grumbled over his disappointment quite pathetically, and was passing a severe judgment on all womenkind, when Leo interrupted him with the remark:

"It is not impossible that Fräulein Kathi Schöne would have sent a different answer had she known Herr Klaus Bewer of Sumatra."

"That is true," Klaus responded, in a changed tone; and after a slight pause, he added, "Let's get out of here, if you don't object. This performance is a great bore."

As the two men stepped into the foyer, Klaus said:

"I'd like to know with whom the lady is going to sup to-night."

"We can ask her."

"What do you mean?"

Leo looked up in surprise. "What do I

mean?" he repeated. "I mean what I say, we can ask her."

"To-morrow?"

"No, immediately. Come along!"

Leo took a little pride in showing his friend what he, as the manager of the Court Theater, could do.

He turned to the left and went on, as if sure of his way, to a little door, through which he passed on to a second, over which were the words "No Admittance"; this he also opened unhesitatingly and with his friend stepped on to the back of the stage. Here the heat was almost unbearable, and the air was filled with unpleasant odors of paint, machinery, and gas. Near them stood a family of acrobats waiting for their cue to go on the stage. One of them, a little fellow, scarce six years old, was attired in clown's dress, and looked out upon the world with his little zebra-painted face peering from under a purple cap. Klaus patted him kindly on the head. The child looked up surprised. But in the next second the whole family sprang out before the public with a loud howl, and were greeted with vociferous applause. Leo was recognized at once by the manager, Herr Fechter, who greeted him with a certain respectful familiarity, after which he lead the way for his colleague of the Court Theater up a dozen neckbreaking steps to the dressing-room.

The prima donna of the Walhalla, who shared her dressing-room with Kathi Schöne, had already gone, and the soubrette was alone.

"Fräulein Schöne," called Fechter, as he knocked on the door, "will you soon be ready?"

"Immediately," answered a voice from within. "What's wanted?"

Klaus experienced a curious sensation as he heard that full-toned, rich voice again.

"A gentleman, one of my colleagues, wishes a word with you."

The three men waited a short time at the door. Leo inquired politely concerning the receipts, and Fechter answered, with pride, that of late—since he had charge of the theater, and reduced everything to system and discipline—the prosperity of the Walhalla had been almost phenomenal. He went on to say, casually, as if it were apparent to the merest observer that this was not the right place for him—however, he had just entered into negotiations with the owner of a very prominent theater, which would probably end in his becoming its manager, and there he would have a chance to display his talents, and, he might say, his knowledge of really classical work. Klaus did not hear a syllable of this conversation; all he heard was the light, quick step in the dressing-room. The bolt was drawn back, the

door-knob turned with a click and Kathi stood before them. She looked even lovelier now in her simple burgher's dress than when on the stage. The dark summer gown, made sailor fashion, with its fantastic white braidings, was especially becoming.

She had carefully removed all false coloring from her face, and her wonderful complexion showed itself in all its glory.

"I thought that it was you," she said to Klaus. "Heavens! you know how to applaud. I must certainly have you at my benefit. Do you gentlemen care to walk in?" she added, seating herself.

Kathi spoke the pure Viennese dialect. Klaus had difficulty in understanding what she said; but her natural manner, her clear, bell-like tones, were all so harmonious with her simple, girlish appearance that he was bewitched. He smiled from very content and happiness. He thought nothing of the disorder and discomfort of the little room, into which he had stepped with the others; he forgot the heat, which had driven thick drops of perspiration out on his face, and the immense flaming gas jets seemed to bring to light hitherto undreamed-of pleasures.

"Do you know, my dear child," began Leo, with an easy familiarity, which grated on his friend's ear, "that your answer has left us utterly disconsolate?"

"I was just as sorry myself," answered Kathi, "but it is one of the things which can't be helped. Levini has already set off with Baron von Albersdorff (Levini was the prima donna, who was known among her friends as Levi), and Prince Strusa is waiting for me at this very moment. We are going to drive to the Flora; they have an Italian feast there to-night. I'm bound for this evening, but I'll keep myself free for to-morrow."

"Set yourself free for to-night, too," said Klaus, with comical persistency. "Don't go with them. Let your friend go to the feast with the baron. We'll go off and have a pleasant little party of our own. My dear Fräulein, grant my request, I beseech you. I just arrived from Sumatra this afternoon, and start to-morrow, by the first train, on my return trip. I have no time to lose, and your Roumanian prince can wait. We'll sup together to-night at any place you choose, and amuse ourselves laughing at the others who are waiting for you at the Flora. Come—"

"It would be a good joke," said Kathi, with a comical expression, feeling that she might as well do it. She liked the idea of leaving the others in the lurch.

"You must come!" repeated Klaus impressively.

Leo skillfully seconded his friend's appeal, and

as the manager also advised her to throw over her friends for this one occasion, she finally concluded to follow his advice. It would shake the prince's belief in his own irresistibility, she said, good-naturedly, as she snapped her fingers in the air.

"I'll do it! I'll come with you! It'll be a great lark!"

She lifted some articles of apparel which lay on a chair, and, tossing them on the dusty floor, sat down at the toilet table, pushing brushes and paints aside to make room for a sheet of paper, on which she quickly and carelessly wrote:

YOUR HIGHNESS: I can not go. My aunt will not allow me. Always yours.

K. S.

"Please send this to the prince's box in ten minutes, Herr Fechter," she said, laughing, as she handed the note to the manager. She puffed a little rice powder on her neck, set her hat firmly on her head, and put her arm gently within that of the giant's, who, at that moment, felt happier than he had perhaps ever felt before in his whole life.

"Now, let's be quick!" cried Kathi.

The manager bowed a farewell to the pair and Leo reached out his hand to him, and then followed the others, who were descending the steep stairs. Kathi went to one of the wings and

peered out to assure herself that Prince Strusa had not yet left his box. Then, while the audience were recalling the acrobats with loud and prolonged applause, the three left the theater stealthily, through a dark, narrow exit. Klaus bashfully pressed the little arm which lay so lightly on his own, and thought what a charming, good-natured creature she was. Kathi took no notice of this slight attention, or, if she did, made no sign.

The evening air was clear and fresh, almost cold in contrast with the suffocating atmosphere of the theater. It made Kathi shiver for a moment as she encountered it, and instinctively she drew closer to the broad-shouldered man at her side. Klaus again pressed the little arm.

"That'll do!" said Kathi now, quite amiably, without any affectation, as she tapped her escort's arm playfully with her fan. "Now, where shall we go?" she asked, in the same breath.

"Wherever you decide!" answered Klaus. "I am here to obey your behests."

"Let's go to Thiel's on the Charlotteburg road!" suggested Leo.

"That'll suit me," echoed the singer.

"To Thiel's on the Charlotteburg road," repeated Klaus to the driver.

During their drive over the streets of the city and through the sand of the pike road there was

little talk. Klaus never took his eyes off the lovely maiden, who sat back comfortably in her corner pressing her feet carelessly against the opposite seat.

He waited expectantly for one gaslight after another, and rejoiced when the bright light fell on her pretty face, or even on the tips of her small, half-hidden shoes.

The carriage halted before a large gate, and they alighted and went in, threading their way between the beer tables at which the groups of towns-people were chatting as they sipped, on up to the house, where an obsequious waiter led them at once into a little comfortable room on the first floor, in which a table was laid for four. Klaus attempted to assist Kathi in removing her hat, and watched her intently while she arranged her hair before the little mirror.

The waiter gave a rapid résumé of a very elaborate menu, which, with slight variations, was ordered *en bloc*, and then disappeared.

Leo opened the time-honored piano which had done duty for so many years and suffered so much that there was a tone of appeal in its discordant notes. He played a harmonious little gavotte by Louis XIII., and played it well, too, but his purpose was not to exhibit his musical skill, but rather to give the couple at table an undisturbed opportunity for conversation.

Their conversation was not exciting, however. Klaus sat with folded arms, resting his elbows on the table, while he drank in the beauty of the little woman opposite, who still fussed over her toilet, and seemed to have nothing to say. He desired nothing more, and was quite contented to sit and gaze; but then, conversation was not Klaus's strong point at any time. All at once he stretched out his two broad palms and looked at her with a warm, earnest smile.

Kathi responded to the silent summons without any mincing, and placed her hands unhesitatingly in his.

The giant closed his fingers upon them and held them fast; then, when he made a motion to rise and bend over her, Kathi drew them back from his strong grasp, but kept time with her fingers, to Leo's music, on the back of his broad hand. She played, also, with the great diamond which he wore on the little finger of his left hand, and seemed delighted with its sparkle and brilliancy. Then when Klaus drew it off his finger and placed it on hers, they both laughed at the size of the ring and the smallness of the finger. Kathi pulled it off at once and handed it back. Klaus shook his head.

"Keep it," he said softly, "just as a remembrance! That you may sometimes think of me. I am so anxious to have you accept it. Please keep it!"

Kathi was for the moment really embarrassed. She looked at the ring, and had enough experience to know that it was a very costly gift he was offering her. She glanced up at the man. His eyes had an expression of quiet truth and honest pleading.

"Ah, but it would never do!" she said softly, but not quite heartily.

"I beg you to take it," he entreated tenderly. "You can not know how happy it would make me."

Kathi felt that it was necessary to raise some further objection.

"But I really dare not accept so expensive a gift from you. We don't know one another at all."

"True enough, we don't know one another; but you please me, Fräulein Kathi, and I want to give you something. Do not raise any objection to such a trifle. You gave me great pleasure by accepting my invitation to-night; now grant me the further joy of showing my appreciation."

"Well, if you really insist and are sure you won't regret it. I thank you heartily. The stone is wonderful! I am delighted to own such a one! I never dreamed of such a charming surprise to-night! It is really magnificent."

She stepped over to the mirror and fastened it on the dark-blue sailor cravat at her throat, where

the great stone seemed to glisten and sparkle with more fire than ever.

"Are you really going away to-morrow?" she asked, as she again took her seat and pulled down her cravat, setting her chin in her neck, that she might watch the scintillations of her new possession.

"That will depend upon you."

"Upon me?"

"Entirely upon you. I am coming home from a foreign land, but for all that I have no home, I have no definite plans; consequently, I can travel or moor my bark at pleasure. Berlin would satisfy me if I could count upon your society. If you decide against me, I go to-morrow."

"How can you speak so? You are jesting with me."

"Most positively not. How can I make it clear to you without making myself ridiculous? I am awkward and crude in my expressions, and certain modes of speech are beyond me. But you surely can understand me, if you only will. You please me! It is a joy for me to sit and look at you, and I dare not think of the time when I shall be alone again. Need I say more?"

The waiter entered at this moment with the supper, thus saving Kathi any reply, and Leo, who had just played the gavotte for the fifth time, rose from the piano with a sigh of relief.

"At last!" he cried. "The Lord be thanked! Now, I'll give you an example of what a good appetite means," and seating himself, he shook out his napkin.

He kept his word, too. He helped himself to a liberal portion of every dish and ate heartily, but Kathi ate little, and Klaus nothing at all. Before the meal was half over, Leo observed the transfer of the diamond from his friend's finger to Kathi's throat, and, as he put a fresh morsel on his fork, he gave a significant wink and said, "Have a care!" He had the talk all to himself. He chatted and joked and told stories without number, while he ate his meal with evident relish and emptied one glass after another.

Kathi was speechless through embarrassment and confusion. She did not know what to make of the great sunburned man opposite, who spoke to her in such an unwonted tone. A tone of so much respect and so much earnestness; so different, for example, from the Roumanian prince, who, true enough, never attempted any liberties with her, but who talked with her in a free and easy manner, and who never had anything to say which was worth a moment's reflection. It suddenly occurred to her that she had never given the prince any serious thought, either while he was chatting to her or after he had left her. Now the consciousness came to her that she was racking

her brains about this foreigner, as she considered him. He was a riddle, and his honest, direct manner, his hearty admiration of herself, troubled the shallow waters of her soul. How suddenly it had all come about! Such a frame of mind as she was now in was very unusual, too—a mixture of uncomfortable curiosity and pleasant astonishment. She was beginning to suspect that she was not quite so foolish, after all, as she had thought herself until now!

There were, perhaps, depths within her which had not been sounded, and which, to this hour, no one had sought to fathom.

How did it happen that this strange man should come into her life, now, to-night, to touch the unknown strings?

She gave Klaus a long and searching look. Now, for the first time, she was pleased with his handsome, manly appearance; she felt a sudden pride in the tall, broad-shouldered fellow, to whom the little woman opposite seemed so demure and defenseless a creature, and, touching her glass abruptly against his, she said, as she raised it to her lips, "You shall stay with us!"

"I will remain if you wish it," said Klaus, looking searchingly into her eyes, and then he emptied his glass without a word.

The Court Theater manager was a discreet man, and after he had appeased his appetite he rose

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quietly and turned his attention once more to music. This time it was "The Beautiful Blue Danube" with which he chose to express his contentment with life.

Klaus seated himself on a sofa near Kathi and took her hand.

"I will stay," he repeated, "as long as you wish. I do not wish to seem pathetic," he continued, in a low tone, "but I must tell you that I have not been so happy and light-hearted for years as I am to-night by your side. It is true we do not know one another, but what does that signify? I need know nothing more of you than I already do. I have longed for something unknown, and now I have found it. That is all that I feel now, and that is all I can say to you. It has all come upon me at one stroke—but how, I can not tell. Is it your glance, your form? is it the bewitching tones of your voice, or is it, perhaps, the wonderful charm of your dialect? I ask myself in vain, and can find no answer. I only know that you make me happy by your very presence, and that I dread the day in which I must part from you."

Kathi listened with growing pleasure, but she could think of nothing else to say than the words, "How remarkable?"

She withdrew her hand slowly from his, rose, and went to Leo, who was giving the keys a few

unmerciful blows. She gave him a tap on the shoulder and suggested that she take his place.

Kathi was no finished performer, but she played with taste, and without waiting to be solicited. She sang one Austrian song after another. Klaus was enchanted. He thought of that hot Sunday in Sumatra when he had sat in the darkened room, revolving in his mind a return to his native land, and now here he was, blessed beyond all his deserts. And when Kathi concluded with the melancholy madrigal of the forsaken maiden, the tears were welling up in his eyes, and he felt relieved that Schneider was at the moment finishing another bottle of wine. The simple, homely picture of the unhappy girl, forgotten, "like the flower, sear and withered," made for the second time a wonderful impression upon him and moved him deeply. The last words,

Beneath it I feel
I'm forsaken for aye,

had scarcely been sung when loud voices and laughter announced the arrival of other guests in the adjoining room.

The walls were thin, and, after listening attentively for a moment, Kathi said in a half-whisper:

"It's the prince and Albersdorff and Levini. They've come from the Flora. We must go."

While Klaus called for and settled the reckon-

ing, Kathi went to the mirror once more and settled her hat upon head, enjoying, while she did so, the glitter of her newly acquired jewel. Then the three tiptoed out in silence, listening, as they retreated, to the laughter and jollity of the recent arrivals.

"They are amusing themselves," said Kathi, not without a certain false pathos, as she emerged into the night air; "amusing themselves after a fashion, just as I have often done. We have not laughed, but yet I am contented with my evening."

Yes, she was certainly contented with her evening; but had she been asked the question whether she would not have been better entertained with Levini, and had she answered honestly, who knows what the answer would have been?

They entered their carriage, and were driven back rapidly to town. Before the house, at 99 Zimmerstrasse, Klaus took leave of Kathi. She gave him permission, at parting, to visit her on the following day.

As the door closed with a bang, and the key turned in the lock, Klaus stood still to catch the sound of her retreating footsteps on the stair, until Leo said impatiently, "Come! there's nothing to be gained by lingering here. I have been greatly deceived in that young woman. I thought we'd have a few hearty laughs, at any

rate. But she hasn't an idea in that pretty head of hers. She sat there like a deaconess by a sick-bed. And that's what she calls a lark. I am very sorry you had such a stupid evening, all through me, too."

"Don't say a word more," said Klaus, in a kindly tone, as he linked arms with his friend. "You did your best, and I am very well contented, my son."

"Then your demands are very modest. She's pretty, there's no denying, but she's too tiresome to endure."

"Listen to me, Leo," began Klaus, after a moment's pause, as they slowly paced the deserted street—it was after one o'clock. "You will laugh at me, but I do not care about that. It's quite clear to me that I'm over head and ears in love with Fräulein Schöne, and as I'm no child, I know what I have to do. I have known girls and women in all conditions of life, and of all countries, yet no other woman has ever made such an impression upon me. No use to tell me it is all nonsense. I know better. I would be contented to sit on her door-step, and feel happy in the knowledge that I was near her. That sounds childish and foolish to you, but it is not so to me. I have decided to do all in my power to make this lovely creature mine. For the past ten years I have lived a life of solitude and drudg-

ery, away from my kind, without knowing what it meant to enjoy life. Now I shall follow my own inclinations. I have no human being in the whole world to care for. I am free and independent. No soul has any right to dictate to me. More than that is unnecessary, you'll acknowledge, Leo."

His companion was speechless from astonishment. He could only gasp:

"God help us!"

"Do not discuss it with me. If you are my friend, Leo, you will help me. Find out for me if Fräulein Schöne's former life is all it should be."

"But Klaus, you are taking leave of your senses. What do you mean?"

"I am determined to make Fräulein Kathi Schöne my wife, if she is reputable."

"And if she isn't?"

"I'll marry her under any circumstance! If her character is aspersed, I'll take her across the ocean—back to Sumatra; as well there as anywhere. But she shall belong to me—to me and to no other!"

His voice trembled at the last words, and he pressed Leo's arm with such force that the latter shrank bank with pain.

"Take your time, my boy; take your time! Keep yourself in check and be prepared for reve-

lations," said Leo earnestly. "Amuse yourself with Kathi, but when you are ready to marry, marry some one else. One would not care to marry a girl whose chosen companions are Prince Strusa and the Signora Levini; and even these she discards for an evening to gratify a mere whim."

Leo was unquestionably right, but that very fact vexed Klaus.

"It's a bad fashion people have of telling all they know and more, too, just because it's unpleasant, in order to annoy their fellow-men," he responded angrily. "I have not troubled myself about Prince Strusa. Made no allusion to him whatever, if I remember correctly, and I never heed the condemnatory speeches of narrow-minded men. But you, as an actor, should understand that the same code of manners does not apply to all men alike. I have often pictured to myself a well-bred, gentle housewife, with soft, white hands and a white apron and a bunch of keys. A woman who, while you spoke of love, would be thinking of the monthly accounts, or the great washing, and I felt that while I should always have the greatest respect for such an one, I could never endure the thought of having her by my side for life."

They had reached the end of the long street now, and Leo directed their way toward the

Linden; but Klaus was the leader to-night, and turned him around in order to retrace their steps once more through the Zimmerstrasse.

"Now," he continued, "let us look at the possibility of a fireside of one's own, from a brighter point of view. I don't care a bit for this quiet respectability, this so-called order. I want to see the bright side of life. I don't want a wife who'll sit sewing buttons on my shirts. I want a bright, animated creature, who will be gay and lively; who will sing me sweet songs; who will be such a joy as I can not describe to you; who will be the delight of my eyes from early morning to late at night; whose very glance will bring comfort to my soul; who will have an artistic nature and be—my love, my companion, my wife!"

Klaus sighed deeply and went on less impetuously:

"With intervals of gall and wormwood! Then a man must needs be a philosopher and say to himself: 'No one has the power to change the unalterable past.'"

His voice had lost its confident tone now. Suddenly he stopped. They were just opposite the house where Kathi lodged. The street was silent. Two policemen on the next corner were discussing their night's work. All the windows were dark except two corner ones in the opposite house, where a narrow ray of light streamed through the half-drawn curtain.

"All with which I need concern myself is the present and the future; they alone belong to me. I will be answerable for them, believe me," continued Klaus, as he stood and looked solemnly at the lighted windows opposite. "Can you not understand what a happiness it will be for me to cheer and sustain so lovely a girl, to train and guide her, to shield her with my love, and to lead her into a higher, brighter life? Be assured I shall think much of duty in this marriage and shall strive to fulfill my every obligation. The good God alone knows through what kind of a childhood she has passed and what examples were ever before her eyes. At least she has not a bad or depraved nature.

"Those clear, kind eyes look at you so honestly that no man need fear to take by the hand the girl who owns them. There may be some annoyances, and, now and then, a fault, but we will not trouble about them until they come. No man living is better fitted to form a clear, fair judgment in such a matter than I, for no man living cares less for the trammels and narrow prejudices of what is called society. If the worst comes to the worst, I shall only be marrying a widow who has never been married."

The expressions to which Klaus gave vent were much more down-hearted than his real opinion of the matter. But he was decided, and he felt that

it was necessary for him to appear reasonable, and justify himself, not only in his friend's eyes, but in his own.

Still, he knew that he had not convinced Leo that he was a rational being; his friend's only condemnation was utter silence, and Klaus felt himself growing indignant once more over the total lack of sympathy. The light was extinguished in the house, and, as Klaus turned away after one farewell glance at the narrow, dark windows opposite, he said, with a sigh:

"What more can I say to you? Only this: I am in love!"

As they retraced their steps he turned back repeatedly to the gloomy house, and when they reached the corner and Herr Schneider strove once more to direct his companion's footsteps toward the Linden, Klaus was too much for him, and turned once more to pace the weary lengths of the Zimmerstrasse.

Leo was very tired, not only of the walking, but of the talking, and only listened with half an ear to the other's incessant conversation on the subject. The street-cleaners, plying their nightly vocation by this time, looked curiously at the pair; but Klaus heeded neither dust nor men. The night-watchman, pacing his lonely beat at 3 o'clock, came across the two men still walking arm in arm with measured tread, and specu-

lated on what they might be up to in these chilly morning hours. It grew lighter and lighter in the east. The day broke quickly. The first beams of the sun glistened like gold on the window panes. The lights in the streets were extinguished. The man who kept the drosky stand at the corner took down his cellar shutters. The city began to awaken slowly.

"Well, good-night," said Leo, who had come to the conclusion that he couldn't stand it any longer, even for a friend from Sumatra. "I'm dead tired, and can't go another step. Your love may keep you awake, but it don't affect me that way. We'll see each other to-morrow, or, more correctly speaking, to-day. You know where to find me, and if I learn anything which will interest you, I'll let you know. Good-by, you'd better take some rest yourself. Here, you!" to the man at the drosky stand, "to 65 Markgrafenstrasse. Be lively, now!"

The driver yawned, stretched himself slowly, as he leaned against the railing, removed the long-emptied fodder pail from beneath the horse's stiff legs, and then climbed slowly into his place, and, with a touch of the whip to the old animal's back, and a sleepy "Hey!" his drosky went rattling down the echoing street.

Klaus walked past Kathi's windows once more, and then turned his steps toward the Kaiserhof.

CHAPTER III.

His sleep was heavy and dreamless; but Kathi's was disturbed by many and fanciful dreams. Toward morning, she dreamed of the Brazilian in the play of "Parisian Life," and when she awoke, her first drowsy thought was of the ring, which she had placed on the little table beside her bed. She reached for it at once. That was no dream, at any rate. The jewel was there. How it sparkled and blazed as it caught the rays of the morning sun. As she turned it on her finger she hummed, unconsciously, the gay air,

He comes from the new world,
This Brazilian with gold.

Kathi gave unusual time and attention to her toilet to-day. She enjoined her landlady, Frau Milcke, to make the room as attractive as possible, and to waste no time about it either, for she expected a visitor at 1 o'clock. She, herself, emptied the withered flowers from the ugly porcelain vases, and displayed a great photograph album on the little oval table with its florid embroidered cover. The few photographs which the album contained were of actors or actresses,

and under each one was an amusing exhibition of sentiment or chirography. One assured Kathi that "she was dearer, far dearer, than aught beside," while "yours for life" held her ever and always in highest esteem. In fact, all the sentiments expressed spoke well for the hearts of Kathi's admirers, even though less might be said for their orthography.

Klaus left his room a little before 12 o'clock. He had bathed and breakfasted, and now a weary hour hung on his hands. He stopped in the hotel office and picked up a morning paper. Unwittingly he turned to the amusement column. The programme at the Walhalla was the same as on the previous evening. It was very disagreeable to him to see Kathi Schöne's name. It even provoked him to notice that the printer had put it in small type, while the family of acrobats and Victoria Levini occupied such conspicuous places. He felt ashamed of himself for allowing such a trifle to annoy him, and threw down his paper in disgust. He looked about him for a minute or two, and then sallied forth into the busy street.

He sauntered down Wilhelmstrasse, and soon turned haphazard into the Linden, and then went on to the right in the direction of Friederichstrasse. It was oppressively hot. He halted before a large advertisement board, and read

again the programme of the evening's amusement at the Walhalla. Then he went on again. It must surely be nearly 1 o'clock now. He looked at his watch; it was ten minutes past 12. He stopped before a jeweler's great plate-glass window. It struck him it would be a nice little attention to show to Fräulein Schöne to buy her some trinket—the little thing had been so pleased with the ring; she seemed to have a fancy for jewelry. He went into the shop, and had various jewels which caught his eye laid out before him. He selected a rare necklace, of great value, paid for it, and sallied forth once more.

He wondered if she would like some flowers. He was back in Wilhelmstrasse again, and caught a glimpse of a florist's shop, fairly overcrowded with flowers. Why had he not thought of it before? But, thank goodness, there was time yet. He turned into the florist's, and a minute later was buying the largest, finest bouquet which the vender could offer. He couldn't dawdle along the streets now with this large bunch of blossoms, but he would not have them sent on any account; that would deprive him of the gratification of presenting them himself. He hailed a drosky. Alas! it wasn't 1 o'clock yet. Perhaps Fräulein Kathi had a sweet tooth and was fond of dainties. He told the driver to drive slowly through the Linden, and when his eye caught a

confectioner's he made the man stop while he got out and entered the place. He bought a fancy basket of fruit, a box of chocolates, another of bonbons, and a third of glacés. The confectioner could hardly restrain a smile as he put the large, grotesque-looking package, with its red ribbons, in the drosky beside the garden of flowers. But Klaus was contented; the long hour was at an end now, and he could hasten to 99 Zimmerstrasse.

When the carriage finally stopped at that number, Klaus had to smile at himself as he gathered together his various purchases. Kathi, who had been waiting at the window, and had heard the carriage draw up, peeped out from behind the curtain, and laughed aloud when she saw the enormous bouquet and the parcel with its red streamers.

Klaus looked up at the window, but Kathi was hidden from view. She sprang back now, and seized Schiller's poems—a book she always read when visitors were expected—and sank down on the hard sofa. The door-bell rang. She could hear the landlady shuffle along the passage, then a blow like a sledge-hammer on her own door.

"Come in!" she cried, in an indifferent tone, without rising, and not seeming in the least disturbed by the pounding, and Klaus entered.

The landlady shut the door behind him. He came with the flowers in his right hand, the

sweets and fruit in his left, and the jewels in his coat pocket; altogether, he presented a most comical appearance.

"Ah, Herr von Bewer!" exclaimed the little singer in joyful surprise, while she rose to receive him, "how good of you to come!" and, bending over the flowers, she buried her little nose in them, and exclaimed:

"These are not for me?"

"For you! All for you!" said Klaus, laying both package and bouquet upon the table.

"But how could you?" said Kathi, with a desire to be polite rather than truthful. She was very enthusiastic over the beauty and rarity of the flowers, and grew quite childish at the sight of the sweets. She nibbled at several different kinds, and was so surprised that Herr von Bewer should know just what she liked. How fond she was of chocolates! of glacés! and, above all else, of bonbons!

"And this belongs to you, too," said Klaus, as he drew, not without a certain diffidence, the morocco case from his pocket.

"Oh, no, nothing else!" she exclaimed, in a changed and embarrassed tone, which added greatly to her charm, Klaus thought, as she turned the little box, with its tissue-paper covering, over and over again in her hand. Then, with coquettish hesitation, she untied the silken cord.

When she saw the morocco case, her cheeks flushed slightly, and she pressed her finger hastily on the spring, and her new possession lay revealed to her eager eyes.

"How magnificent! How lovely!" she cried, in genuine surprise and delight now. "What can I say, how can I thank you, for all the pleasure you are giving me! It is too beautiful!"

Levini had a necklace not unlike this. How Kathi had envied the prima donna her possession!

Kathi took it for granted that this was a Parisian imitation, also; but it was costly enough even at that. But when she read the name of the firm on the white satin lining, she was stupefied. She took up the necklace carefully, and pressed the golden clasp with beating heart. She understood little about precious stones, but her instinct did not fail her. The whole thing bore the impress of genuineness. She tripped lightly across the room, two or three times, like an overjoyed child.

"Oh, it is too beautiful, much too beautiful!"

She fastened it on before her mirror, over the simple summer morning-gown, bending her graceful neck forward as she did so, in order to clasp it securely. Then she unbuttoned her linen collar, and took it off, in order that the necklace might rest against her neck; and after this, she studied the effect carefully and critically in the glass.

"Why are you so good to me?" she asked, turning toward Klaus, and stretching out her hands impulsively.

"Why am I?" responded Klaus, as he drew her toward him. She did not resist any more. He took the little head between his hands, and gave her a first kiss, an earnest, almost devotional kiss upon her forehead. As he clasped her tender figure in his arms, and she laid her arm trustingly on his shoulder, he felt as if his heart would break for very joy. He pressed his lips long and tenderly upon the brow of this beloved maiden, and his breath came thick and fast.

"I like you so very, very much," whispered Kathi. She spoke sincerely enough, too. No one else had ever treated her with such kindness and such respect. She felt that his manner was so entirely different from that of any of the others.

"If that is so—if you are in earnest—then we will never part," cried Klaus. "Listen to me, Kathi. I am not a man to reflect or ponder much, but, for all that, I do not act precipitately, and know full well what I say and do. I love you with all my heart! You have taken me captive. You alone can make me happy. If you have not already given your promise to some one else, and can, with a clear conscience, give your

hand to a simple, upright man, who loves you with his whole heart, then I am more than blessed."

Kathi only understood half—the declaration of love. The proposal of marriage she did not understand.

"Don't be so impetuous!" she said, laughing. "I have no other love, and you are to remain here. We'll learn to know one another better, and see how we'll agree. I'll wear this lovely necklace to-night in your honor." She felt it necessary to say something polite.

"You mean at the Walhalla?" asked Klaus.

"Of course; where else? Won't the others be green with envy, though!"

"You must never go there again," said Klaus, very earnestly. "You must not go out to-day under any circumstances."

"Don't get cross!" laughed Kathi. "I'd lose half my month's pay if I were not there."

"I don't care if you lose a whole month's, and are fined into the bargain. You must not go again. Never again do I want to see you in that blue costume with the swan's-down trimming. I never want another man to send his card to your dressing-room and take you out to supper. You have done with all that. Your contract is dissolved. I'll take care of everything. And you must not remain here any longer, either," he con-

tinued, looking around the stuffy, ill-furnished room, "it's too gloomy for you! You must have a bright, well-furnished suite of rooms in one of the hotels in Unter den Linden, where you can be comfortable and at least be able to receive people. You shall have beautiful apartments, such as you deserve. Why do you look so astonished and incredulous? And you must engage a companion, in order that it may be possible for me to be with you a part of each day. Of course, you will not desire any intercourse with your old acquaintances of the Walhalla; they are not desirable friends for you. You can not know how happy it will make me to open a new world before your eyes, to change your whole existence, and to give you all I have to give to brighten your life!" He stopped a moment, and then went on, almost bashfully:

"We need not bother about ways and means. I have plenty for us both!"

Kathi listened to all this with growing astonishment, like one in a dream. It was a very entertaining programme which this blonde stranger unrolled in such a simple, matter-of-fact manner, as he sat opposite her. Apartments in Unter den Linden, and a companion! All this meant a life of gaiety and riot, money galore for fine gowns, with endless possibilities such as had never entered her mind, even in her wildest dreams. And

should all these become realities, not in a year and a day, but upon the spot? For one moment she thought it was all a hoax—for only one moment. Suddenly the seriousness of the whole affair presented itself to her. She looked with clear glance at what had seemed so confused and hazy until now. She saw before her the future which depended on her decision, and her first excitement was over. How long would this ideal existence last? There must be some definite promise; something beyond this play of the hour. This feeling was so strong within her that she could no longer rejoice.

"Dear friend," she said, very earnestly, "let us talk to one another like rational beings. Do you really mean that I shall give up my position at the theater—my career, in fact? And do you know what that signifies? It is true, I do not occupy a very exalted position now, but better days are before me. I have an engagement in view now which promises better things. And when you are tired of me, are disgusted with me, I can begin all over again, I suppose? The change from this dark room in the Zimmerstrasse to apartments in Unter den Linden is easily accomplished, but the change back from Unter den Linden to Zimmerstrasse—that would cost many a tear."

"You are a child," responded Klaus, with a

good-natured laugh. "You do not know me yet, but you will learn to know me when I win your love." He put his arm around her, and, laying her head gently on his breast, kissed her tenderly.

"You will be part of myself, you know; you will be mine for life—for life," he repeated softly, and the strong man trembled like a timid child.

Kathi was appeased. This was neither the language nor the manner of an unprincipled man. It had the ring of a true lover. She felt that she, for her part, must make Klaus understand that he had placed his affections on no unworthy object, and she related to him, with simple straightforwardness, and in that charming dialect of hers, the story of her early life. How she had been forced, by the unhappiness of her home life, to seek her fortune before the footlights. She lost her mother when she was a little child. Her father, a well-to-do leather dealer, had been ruined on the exchange. A friend of the family, recognizing in her some histrionic talent, had had her educated, to a certain extent, at least, for the stage, and afterward had secured for her a position with an opera company at Klausenburg; after that, through the means of a Berlin agent, she had been enticed to the Walhalla without knowing she was to be degraded into a mere music-hall singer. That was bad, but she felt

certain she would receive a financial promotion when her present three months' engagement was over. But her mind was made up to return to the opera whenever an opportunity should offer. But now, thank God, she would be free from it all. The idea of a companion pleased her most of all. She had always felt so much alone!

Klaus listened enraptured to all her simple chatter, and believed it as though it were gospel. He had the proud feeling of a conqueror. Had not Kathi bent her will to his, unhesitatingly? She would leave the stage at his bidding. She would take up her residence on the street he chose. Best of all, she would love him.

"If you have really decided that I must not sing to-night, it is high time that I inform the management. Fortunately, I am in the good books of the physician of the theater."

"Don't trouble yourself about all that!" said Klaus. "I'll manage it through Schneider. He'll be breakfasting at Töpfer's about now. I'll engage the rooms for you, and you pack your traps and be ready by 3 o'clock, then we'll make a few purchases together and you can enter into your new kingdom before night. 'What can be done to-day need not be delayed until to-morrow.' Isn't that so, my sweetheart?"

He smoothed her black hair caressingly, and leaned over and whispered in her ear, "And

now that we understand one another we can talk like rational people. That's what you said, you know. Even though one makes a radical change in position, a salary day is a necessity as much as ever. My purse is on the table; do not hesitate to use it, my dear child. Pay all you owe. Good-by. I'll be back in a couple of hours!"

He kissed her on the cheek, took his hat, turned back for a second greeting at the door, and went off with a happy smile.

Kathi stood for a short time in the middle of the room where he had left her. She had a troubled look on her face. Then she shook her head slowly and walked to the table and sat down. She opened the pocket-book and counted the money. Two thousand marks, in hundred, and fifty, mark notes. Klaus, in his anxiety to put the purse on the table in an unobserved moment, had neglected to remove certain business papers and a letter from his brother Wilhelm, in San Francisco, in which the latter stated he intended visiting his native land the beginning of the ensuing year.

The business papers were all Greek to Kathi, but she opened the California letter and read it eagerly. Then she sat musing, with a discouraged look on her face, for some minutes longer.

Suddenly she arose with a jerk and drew out a large willow hamper, which stood in an alcove,

and opened her closet and the drawers of her bureau. She took out one article of clothing after another, and scanned them critically, asking herself the question whether it were worth her while to take them or not. What would she do in Unter den Linden with all this cheap finery? One was out of date, another soiled and worn. The landlady's heart would rejoice at them; she could make them over for her daughter. Almost the only thing which stood the test was the sailor suit she had worn the previous evening. When Kathi came to her underwear, she had a feeling of real shame that it was so meager in quantity and poor in quality. She wondered for the moment if she couldn't run out and buy herself a new outfit—she had the means now—but gave up the idea with a sigh, for there was no time. But what did it matter? Klaus must know she had but a limited wardrobe; he wouldn't have provided her so liberally with money, if he had not understood that. She pushed the hamper back into the alcove with a kick, locked the wardrobe door again, and pushed in the shoe drawer.

She called the landlady, who usually performed the services of dressing-maid, as well. While the woman was fastening on her one presentable frock, Kathi told her she would be obliged to leave her to-day, but she would pay her a full month's rent and also give her for her little Hilda

—she had always liked the little thing—all her clothes, which were there in a heap on the floor. Frau Milcke was overjoyed, and showed her appreciation of the favors showered upon her; had she not always said that Fräulein Schöne had great things in store for her; she, who was so kind, so amiable, so beautiful, would get the reward she deserved. Ah, she was a good prophet, if she was poverty-stricken and took lodgers; she could see beyond her nose as well as another.

Kathi gathered up her trifles, the volume of Schiller, some music, her album, her newly acquired jewels, and her toilet articles, and thrust them in a satchel. She gave the trunk, with her theatrical costumes, into Frau Milcke's keeping for the present. Then she put on her hat and her veil, put the satchel on the sofa beside her, and took her bouquet in her hand. She was ready for her journey now—for her journey into a new world, into a new life. She left little behind, not even a fleeting regret.

So she sat and waited for Klaus.

Klaus, in the mean time, had seen Leo, and the latter had gone at once, at his friend's behest, to inform the manager that Kathi Schöne was done with them all forever. The news created neither excitement nor much comment at the Walhalla. Kathi Schöne was far down the list, as Klaus had noticed, and the management took it easily. She

was the daughter of a shoemaker in Vienna, the manager told Leo; had been employed herself in a shoe shop, but had not liked it, so had sought some kind of a position on the stage. She had been engaged as a chorus singer at Klausenburg, from that she had gone into a music-hall at Prague, and from there had come to the Walhalla. Nothing was known to her discredit, but, with a shrug, she had brought no certificate of virtue with her. In fact, Herr Fechter had nothing definite to tell about her. Of late, Prince Strusa had been amusing himself with her; whether it amounted to anything or not, he could not say.

As soon as Leo had heard all this, he was ready with his programme. Why should he thrust his hand into the hornet's nest? Klaus was of age, and ought to know his own mind. What would he gain by telling Klaus the plain truth? Nothing but curses. There was little to tell, at best. He had warned him the night before, all to no purpose, so he would let it rest now.

So he only told Klaus the agreeable things and refrained from repeating Herr Fechter's questionable reflections.

Klaus pressed his friend's hand warmly. Leo had indeed proven himself true and leal.

The two went together to the Hôtel de Rome, where Klaus engaged rooms for Kathi. A salon, dining-room, dressing-room, and bedchamber,

with a small room above for the companion. After that Leo left him to attend to some final matters concerning the annulment of Kathi's contract, and Klaus sprang into his carriage and was driven back to 99 Zimmerstrasse.

His heart beat high with joy when he saw Kathi sitting on the sofa, with her bouquet in her hand, awaiting his return. And when she said, in her comical manner, "I have decided to leave all the trash behind; I don't lose much; you must take me as I am now, without any finery," Klaus thought no other woman could be so simple and innocent, and he held her in his arms and kissed her and called her the most bewitching of maidens.

Kathi summoned the landlady and bade her good-by after a civil, friendly fashion; then she took the arm of her happy and beaming lover, and the two sallied forth into the new and undiscovered country.

Frau Milcke stood watching the carriage until it turned the corner. She shook her head thoughtfully, while she fastened the notice, "Handsomely Furnished Rooms to Let," in her front window. Then, turning away with a sigh, she murmured, "Yes, yes, all the world is seeking for happiness, and must have it." Then she added philosophically, as she fastened the door, "Well, it's the main thing, after all."

CHAPTER IV.

Kathi accommodated herself to her new surroundings with a rapidity that was truly astonishing. Her first few purchases quite took away her breath, everything she saw was so lovely and expensive. It scarcely took an hour for her to discover how unsophisticated her new lover was concerning the value of money. After making this discovery she assumed control, and squandered money with the assurance of one who had had years of experience. She ceased exclaiming and admiring, and grew as fussy and particular as the oldest shopper in Berlin. She gave the shopmen her orders with the calm indifference of a great lady, while Klaus stood passive and admiring by her side.

It only required one afternoon to metamorphose this shoemaker's daughter of Vienna, this music-hall singer, this soubrette of the Walhalla, who had haggled over the price of her breakfast not twenty hours before, into an easy, confident girl, who spent thousands of marks during a few hours with all the *aplomb* of a woman of the world.

When they arrived at the hotel, the porter informed the "gnädiges Fräulein" that a number of parcels had been sent to her rooms. Kathi was soon at work opening them, and now indeed she showed her delight. She made an occasional derogatory remark concerning the stupidity of some shop-keeper or other, who had mistaken her order, but, on the whole, she was very pleasant. The two dined together in Kathi's little dining-room, and afterward took a long walk. Seven o'clock struck from a church tower near by while they were sauntering through the Thiergarten. When Kathi heard it, she exclaimed:

"You can not know how happy I am that I have escaped forever from that dressing-room, where I was sweltering last night at this hour."

Klaus was too rejoiced to hear her thus express herself to do more than press her little hand.

He parted from her early, for the day had been a tiresome one for Kathi, he said, and she needed rest.

Kathi refused the services of a maid, who volunteered to assist her in undressing, explaining, at length, that she was a little particular, and one had to grow accustomed to her ways. Her last maid had just left her, but another was engaged, who would be with her early on the morrow, and then she would be all right again.

She ordered her bath to be prepared for 9

o'clock, her breakfast for 10, and her hairdresser for 11; but no visitors were to be admitted before noon. After which the serving maid departed, with many courtesies and wishes that the "gnädiges Fräulein" might pass a comfortable night.

Kathi put on one new article of attire after another to see how becoming they were. On the whole, she was well satisfied with her afternoon's work, though she decided to add a feather here, or a bit of lace there, to give the finishing touch to a bonnet or some other bit of finery. Then she put them away in her capacious wardrobes and drawers, and went to her bed, the first really comfortable bed, she reflected, upon which she had ever lain. She soon fell asleep, and as she dozed off her last thoughts were of the purchases which were yet to arrive in the morning.

Klaus walked slowly down Unter den Linden. Before Dressel's he met several of Schneider's friends, with whom he had supped on the previous evening. They shook hands with him and invited him to again make one around the Stammtisch. He declined their invitations politely, and went on his course alone, feeling secretly annoyed that his meditations had been interrupted even for a moment. His head and heart were both full. He had much to consider, much to overcome, before he could bring all his hopes and

plans to full maturity. But his head was buzzing, and he could not get his brain in working order. He stood at the entrance of the park and looked dreamily into the distance. Finally he entered by the Brandenburg gate and struck into a gloomy side path, which, for that very reason, was avoided by the Berliners at night as dangerous. For the past twenty-four hours, since he had seen the Viennese singer, Klaus had been in a state of intoxication. He could think of nothing else but Kathi—her manner, her voice, her eyes.

The evening was close and sultry. A storm lay in the air. Not a star gleamed in the heavens, not a breath of air stirred the old towering trees. Klaus went deeper and deeper into the lonely, desolate wood. No sound but the crunch of his own boots upon the gravel, and the distant hum of a great city, fell on his ear. Once or twice he met an equivocal pair of lovers loitering along, but he paid them no heed. What interest had they for him? What interest had any one for him but Kathi? He had no other wish than to be unmolested and unobserved. He breathed so heavily at times that it almost amounted to a sob. He reviewed his whole life—he thought of his home, of his father, of the liquidation of his business at Sumatra, of Prince Strusa, of the smiling face of a certain shop-keeper who had served

Kathi that day; what business had the man to smile? confound him!

This oppressive air, with its lack of ozone, was making him sleepy. A gloomy, brooding mood came over him, the reaction from his recent state of intense excitement. Every now and then the question would force itself upon him, through all his confusion of brain, whether he was doing right; whether he was acting with discretion, with prudence?

This question made him angry each time it intruded itself upon his confused brain. He would not ask himself such questions and he would not answer.

"It is my own affair and nothing to any one else!" And this seemed to him the conclusion of the whole matter.

Through the trees to his left he could see the lamp-lights gleaming. A violent wind blew suddenly from the north with great force, telling that the brewing storm was about to burst. Klaus hurried toward the entrance now, to avoid it, and had reached the corner of Hohenzollernstrasse before the heavy drops began to fall. Here he took a drosky and was driven rapidly to the Kaiserhof.

When he reached his own room, he threw open the windows. The rain was falling in torrents now, clattering against the tin roofs and fairly

flooding the asphalt pavements. The black heavens were ablaze at every moment with fierce lightning flashes, which zigzagged across the firmament.

Klaus stood at the window in his shirt sleeves, watching the row of droskies beneath him. The coachmen had taken refuge in their vehicles, but the lightning's gleam played across the backs of the poor, patient horses, who hung their heads lower than usual to-night.

His spirits began to revive. He called to a waiter to light a candle and place it on his writing-table, to put fresh ink in the dry well, to bring him pen, paper and envelopes, tea and rum, and some cigars. He paced up and down the room until his orders were obeyed. When the man had done his bidding, and he was alone again, he threw off his collar, unbuttoned his shirt bosom, and drew a deep sigh of relief as the cool air struck his breast.

Then, while the window-blinds rattled and the light flickered with every gust of wind, and the rain splashed on the hard pavement below, he seated himself and wrote as follows to:

HERR DR. GOTTLIEB BEWER, *Tutor, Greifswald University.*

BERLIN KAISERHOF, August 29, 1878.

MY DEAR GOTTLIEB: As you will see from the heading of this letter, I am once again in your vicinity. We must see one another soon. You

know how poor a correspondent I am. I will tell you everything in a few words. All has gone well with me and I am a rich man. But you have something better than that upon which to congratulate me. I am engaged to be married. Engaged to a charming girl from Vienna, who speaks German with the most delightful accent I ever heard. Fräulein Kathi Schöne was, before our engagement, a singer, but she has given up the stage forever, now. She comes from a plain, but honest, worthy family. I will not describe my fiancée to you, for you will see her. As we have no one's pleasure but our own to consult, our marriage will take place as soon as the necessary formalities are concluded.

I write by this mail to Elise at Husum, and Wilhelm in San Francisco. You can communicate with the Lübeck people, if you desire, as I hold no intercourse whatever with them.

I shall expect a visit from you very soon, or will go to you if you prefer. I am very happy.

Affectionately,

KLAUS.

The letters to the pastor's wife and to Wilhelm were, almost word for word, copies of that which he had written to his younger brother. He sealed and addressed them, blew out the candle on the table, threw his cigar out of the window, and closed the casement. After that he prepared for rest slowly, very slowly, and sat for full fifteen minutes on the edge of his bed watching the dim flare from the solitary candle on the bureau as it fell on the brass claw of the table; then, with a

sigh, he put out the light and threw himself on the bed with the words, "It's my business and no one's else!"

He lay awake for a long time staring with wide-open eyes into the darkness, until the weary lids finally closed in sleep.

At half-past 11 the next morning, the porter of the Hôtel de Rome explained to Klaus that Fräulein Schöne would receive no guests until 12 o'clock.

Klaus was staggered for a moment, but when he thought it over he discovered that that was very proper. Indeed, he was much pleased that Kathi had entered into her new position with such dignity and propriety. He took advantage of the interval to secure a box for the benefit that night, and dispatched a line to Leo making an appointment for supper afterward.

Kathi looked bewitching in a simple, but elegant, morning gown, with her hair most becomingly dressed by the artistic *friseur*.

Klaus took her in his arms and kissed her as though they had not met for years. She was in the gayest of spirits, and showed him how beautifully she had arranged everything, and scolded a little over the tardiness of one or two shopmen.

"Will you not lunch with me?" she asked, without any appearance of jesting. Klaus accepted humbly, and Kathi rang and gave her orders to the waiter.

During the meal, which they both discussed with good appetites and good humor, Klaus handed her the tickets for the evening.

"How very vexatious," she said. "My gowns won't be here until to-morrow morning. I have nothing to wear! I can not possibly go to-night."

"I am very sorry to hear that," said Klaus, puzzled. "You just showed me a couple of beautiful gowns in your wardrobe there; you'd look lovely in either of them."

"Oh, but those are street gowns. Ah! I see you don't understand anything about women's dress, my dear," she added, laughing and shaking her finger at him.

It had only taken twenty-four hours to make Kathi, with her one simple sailor frock, understand the difference between promenade and evening costumes.

"I am very sorry," said Klaus; "all the more so as I had sent Leo an invitation to join us at supper afterward."

"Tell me," said Kathi, while she cut the meat from the chicken wing with great skill, "tell me, do you care very much about this Herr Leo Schneider?"

"Care very much? No! He's an old-time acquaintance, who has always been courteous to me, and with whom I have had some pleasant intercourse—nothing more, nothing less."

"To speak frankly, he does not please me at all. He's too great a gossip. Then, he's a creature always bubbling over with a species of good-humor which is particularly abhorrent to me. You understand what I mean—his whole manner smacks of condescension. Good Lord! and who is this Herr Leo Schneider? And why does he speak to me as if I were a creature from a lower world?"

"I didn't fancy his mode of addressing you, myself. But you must not be too hard on him. It's only his theatrical manner."

"Oh, no it isn't! None of the people I've ever met had it," said Kathi, in the pert manner of the provincial actress. "Just write him and say you won't be able to meet him. Two is much better company than three. Don't you think so?"

"Just as you say," said Klaus, taking her little hand and pressing it affectionately. He gazed at her for a moment without speaking. How beautiful she was. Lovely as a picture! "Kathi," he said, in a changed tone, "have you thought anything about procuring the necessary papers? It is foolish for us to lose any time."

"What papers?" asked Kathi indifferently.

"Why, the papers which will be wanted at the marriage ceremony. I think a certificate of baptism and your father's consent will be all that will be required."

"Yes, I see," said Kathi, in her careless way.

The scales had fallen from her eyes. All which had seemed so wonderful and mysterious yesterday was now quite clear. She had completely mastered the strange emotions within her. She said to herself that she would reveal nothing, would show neither surprise nor excitement for the future. Yes, she would marry this blonde-haired giant; he'd make as good a husband as another. For, of course, he meant marriage or he would not have mentioned the papers. But if he did not mean marriage! Should she tolerate his presence, allow him to breakfast with her, walk with her, compromise her by their appearing so publicly together? She felt the time to speak had come.

"Yes, I have been thinking much about the papers," she began. "But I have also thought it was your duty to procure them. You must write to my father yourself. I have been just a little hurt," her voice had a grieved tone here, "not much, but just a little bit, that you have not spoken to me of my father before; why, you have not even asked for his address."

"You are right, child. I have only thought of you—of you and none other. I will write to him at once—to-day. I wrote to my own people last night of our betrothal."

Klaus then told Kathi all about his own family,

and the girl listened to his account with unfeigned interest. She was especially pleased, she said, to learn that her future sister was a pastor's wife, a good religious woman. She asked Klaus many questions concerning her, and regretted that he could tell her so little; also that "sister Elise" lived so far away.

After lunch, Klaus waited in the salon while she arrayed herself for a promenade. When she appeared in the door in her new and very becoming walking dress, with a coquettish hat perched on the top of her head, he was fairly radiant with joy, and gave free expression to his ecstasy. Kathi was beaming, too, and left the room on his arm in a very contented frame of mind. In the hotel lobby she stopped to look at a huge frame of photographs; among the pictures she recognized many of her friends "in the profession," as she explained to Klaus.

"Do I really please you to-day?" she said, as they walked along. For answer Klaus looked down at her lovingly and pressed her arm. "Then let us go and have our photographs taken together. We can send one to Elise at Husum, and one to my father also."

So, arm in arm, they went to the photographers.

CHAPTER V.

In a dark, gloomy waiting-room, adjoining the magistrate's office on Mittelstrasse, sat eight persons—a poorly clad woman of about forty, waiting patiently, with tear-dimmed eyes and pallid cheeks, to tell of the death of her child; a young rosy-cheeked department clerk, who came to announce the birth of a son; over near the only window sat Kathi, dressed in a simple but elegant brown silk gown; Klaus, who stood by her, wore a dark suit, with frock-coat, and looked unusually well. Leo Schneider was attired in a dress suit, with a white silk tie, just as he had appeared in a society play the previous evening. Near him stood a delicate, fair-haired man of thirty or thereabouts, with gold-rimmed spectacles. He wore a spick and span new frock-coat, with unusually long skirts, which fitted him very badly. This was Dr. Gottlieb Bewer, who had arrived in Berlin the previous day in order to be present at his brother's marriage on this, the 31st of August, in the year of our Lord 1878.

Somewhat distant from this group, but near enough to show she belonged to them, sat Frau

Milcke, her face wreathed in smiles. She had received information of the joyful event through her daughter Augusta, who now stood beside her, and who had been in Fräulein Schöne's service for the past three weeks. She had not been pleased to hear that the young folks would not be married in church. "People must have some kind of religion" was one of her favorite maxims. At the same time she did not refuse to act as a witness when requested so to do.

The door opened.

"Herr Bewer comes next, I believe," said an official politely, "and the witnesses."

The four entered the adjoining room followed by Frau Milcke and Augusta.

While the officer was going through the formalities, and filling up the necessary papers, those concerned stood in absolute silence. Leo looked indifferent and handsome. Klaus was deeply moved; he seemed to be newly aroused from the clear sailing of the past to the thought of tempests; yea, even the possibility of shipwreck, in the future. Even Kathi was moved, and when the man offered her the pen, and begged her with a polite bow to sign her new name, the name that from this hour was to be hers, her hand trembled violently, and the flourishes, which she had been practicing in her quiet moments for the past fortnight, failed her at the all-important moment.

Katherine Bewer! As she signed the name on the register, did she think of it as the profound and laconic symbol of a new life, a new world, which was beginning with this hour?

The magistrate was the first one to offer his congratulations to the new wife. The others pressed her hand, but said little. Frau Milcke sniffled.

The little wedding breakfast was set in Kathi's dining-room, and a sad enough feast it was. In vain were the finest dishes and choicest wines set before them. The four seemed wrapped in a gloom which nothing could dispel. Klaus was all attention to his young bride. Gottlieb was a bashful, retiring man, who had never yet contributed to the gaiety of any company in which he had been placed. Leo, after his first joke, which had not raised the ghost of a smile, turned his attention to the viands without any further attempt to enliven the company. The two witnesses at the side table ate heartily and drank freely. Leo, who was a poet on occasion, and who was noted for his happy sallies in toasts and after-dinner speeches, had had some thought of immortalizing himself by a little poetic effusion in honor of his old friend's wedding feast. But finally he had come with empty hands. He could think of no good word to rhyme with Sumatra, and he felt he lacked the gift of eloquence to rightly apostrophize this union of poesy and prose, of art with commerce!

The meal ended with as little animation as it had begun. Gottlieb, who was enchanted with the beauty and winning manners of his new sister, kissed her and pressed her hand warmly at parting; and as he threw his arms around Klaus the tears stood in his eyes. Leo kissed Frau Bewer's little hand with a great show of deference, and energetically grasped the large one of his old friend as if his heart were too full for utterance. Then he bowed himself out gracefully. Frau Milcke made a series of courtesies and departed, too much awed by the big man to give utterance to the garrulous congratulations which were on her lips. Klaus and Kathi turned their backs on the pretty rooms in Unter den Linden and started on their honeymoon tour.

The following morning found the young people with Augusta, who still retained her place as maid, established at the Nassauhof in Wiesbaden, where Klaus had telegraphed for rooms three days previous.

Klaus was superlatively happy. He outshone himself in delicate and thoughtful attentions to his bride. It was almost pathetic to see the great, good-natured fellow, whose every thought and action was for the well-being and pleasure of his little wife. He never tired of looking at the *petite* figure and lovely face of his new possession, or of listening to her musical voice, with its singular,

but none less charming, dialect. There were moments when he felt so proud of her that he was tempted to shout for joy. Kathi was very pleasant and amiable, too. She had grown accustomed to him and to her position during the past few weeks, and it was all very nice and agreeable.

She did not ask herself concerning the depth of her feelings. This new husband was dead in love with her, and she was pleased that it was so—that was all. He adored her, and she had a feeling of gratitude for all the benefits he bestowed.

A week before her marriage, Fräulein Levini had called at the Hôtel de Rome to see her, and she had exhibited with much pride her jewels, her laces, and her smart gowns; but when the prima donna had asked her the pertinent question, "But do you love him?" her answer, which was a question, too, had been strictly truthful.

"Why should I not? He buys me everything I can think of under the sun."

"And are you quite happy?" Kathi had responded once more with an interrogative:

"How can you ask such a question? Don't I tell you he showers gifts on me."

She was quite contented, and, as long as she had shopping to do, life was very pleasant; but, during the last few days before her marriage, time hung heavily on her hands. Klaus's continual visits grew very monotonous, for he was anything

but an enlivening conversationalist. All he ever said was that she was lovely, or that he loved her beyond belief, or that he was supremely happy.

She did not confess it to herself, but still she felt that in her former life there had been constant change and variety. At the Walhalla the unexpected was happening; something new, even if not always pleasant, was forever occurring. Even the quarrel with Levini, in the alley at the back of the theater, had been exciting—and she thought with satisfaction how she had come off victor in that war of words. Then there were supper parties arranged for nearly every evening in the week, and at these she was continually seeing new faces.

Now, one day was just like the other. Even the presents, which came with clock-like regularity, soon seemed part of the day's programme. Nothing really and truly exciting ever happened.

She engaged a companion, as Klaus desired, but she only kept the young woman, a well-educated daughter of a city official, three days. Kathi said she had no fault to find with her, she was everything she claimed to be, but she was a dull, poky Berliner, so at the end of three days Kathi paid her a week's salary, and gave her a parting blessing with a sigh of relief. Then she engaged the seventeen-year-old daughter of her former landlady, Augusta Milcke, and with her

she was well pleased. She could gossip with Gustel much better than with Klaus himself. They were of the same station in life, had breathed—the one in Vienna, the other in Berlin—the same atmosphere. Kathi confided to Gustel, the morning of her marriage, that she was glad this tiresome life at the Hôtel de Rome was over, at any rate. So Wiesbaden was an agreeable change.

When the young couple appeared on the promenade after dinner, or sauntered through the park, listening to the music, they attracted much attention. One of the numerous idlers who waste their time in Wiesbaden, investigating the history of the latest new-comer, discovered that the broad-shouldered, fair-haired man was an American millionaire, Mr. Bewer by name, who, with his wife, the faultlessly attired brunette, was traveling through Europe. The ladies whom they met took special note of the enormous diamonds which Kathi wore in her ears.

All this was manna to Kathi's soul. To be the object of so much curiosity, and, naturally, of so much envy, delighted her beyond measure, and she was, as a return for all these favors, conspicuously affectionate toward Klaus.

The second evening after their arrival there was a great festival, commemorative of the battle of Sedan. The park and streets were illuminated.

there were fireworks, and finally there was a great ball in the Kursaal.

Klaus, who had no wish to deny Kathi anything, took her to the ball. For himself, he was out of his element in a dancing room; he knew nothing but a polka, and couldn't even keep time to that very well.

As they had attracted attention in the afternoon in the park, so they were the cynosure of all eyes in the ball-room. Scarcely had they taken their places, when a number of officers, who had come over from Mainz and Kassel for the dance, petitioned the ball manager to present them to Klaus, of whom they immediately asked permission to dance with his charming wife. Kathi was a perfect dancer, and, as is the case with all good dancers, dearly loved it. Klaus pressed her handkerchief and fan involuntarily to his lips as he watched her, his own lovely wife —his wife, who was a thousand times lovelier than any other woman in the room—go whirling past him in the arms of a slender lieutenant. The dance was over. The officer brought his fair partner back to her husband and bowed low as he expressed his thanks. A comrade was behind him, waiting to beg for a similar favor, when Kathi turned around suddenly and exclaimed, in a surprised tone:

"Why, it's Baron Albersdorff!"

"What did you say?" asked Klaus, who had not understood her half-surprised exclamation.

"I didn't say anything," she answered.

Almost immediately a cavalry officer stepped up to Klaus and introduced himself as:

"Baron von Albersdorff."

"My name is Bewer."

"Will you have the goodness to present me to your wife?"

"Baron von Albersdorff wishes to be introduced to you—my wife."

"May I look at your programme, my dear madam? I am fortunate in finding a vacant place. With your permission—my heartfelt thanks—I have the honor."

With a deferential bow, the baron left them.

Albersdorff! Klaus felt sure he had heard the name before. But where had he heard it? There was something unpleasant connected with it; he felt certain of that. Albersdorff! Hadn't Kathi mentioned a name which sounded like that just a moment ago, and then refused to repeat it?

A new waltz began, and a new partner carried Kathi off once more. Her husband held her handkerchief and fan as before, and Kathi danced like a fairy, but for some reason this second dance gave him no pleasure. He looked for the baron among the dancers, and found him without difficulty. He felt certain he had never seen the man's

face until to-night; but he had heard the name. Where? Where? Perhaps Kathi could tell him.

His reflections were interrupted by his wife's return. She was warm, and reached for her fan at once.

"Have you ever spoken to me of a Baron Albersdorff? I've heard the name some place, but I can't think where, and it worries me."

"Well, don't worry me in turn, you dear, good man, but get me an ice. This heat is unendurable."

Klaus gave the order to a waiter who passed them at that moment.

"Don't you think you had better take a rest? You look exhausted."

"Take a rest! Ah, you don't know me. I never tire of dancing, never! The longer the better. It's only the heat of the room. What a shame it is you can not dance! How I wish we could dance together. There's nothing finer in the world than a good waltz. That's one of Johann Strauss's beginning now. Isn't it perfect?"

She ate her ice slowly as she chatted.

"I'm having such a heavenly time! You're the dearest, best husband in all the world. I like Wiesbaden; we'll stay here a long time."

The uncomfortable feeling which had come over Klaus during the last waltz was banished by Kathi's gentle, loving manner.

"As long as you wish," he said heartily.

Just then another partner, a young lawyer, came to sue for Kathi's favor. Why were the pauses so short, and the dances so long, Klaus asked himself. There he was again, with fan and kerchief, while Kathi was spinning round and round in a circle with a lawyer; a homely enough man, too, who stepped on her train at this very moment. What pleasure could she find in it all? Wouldn't it be a hundred times nicer to be sitting tête-à-tête in the garden, or in one of their large, cool rooms—they had seven of them—in the Nassauer Hof? What need had they of company? These lawyers and these officers! And this Albersdorff!

Albersdorff! Who was the man, anyway?

"You must sit through the next dance, just to please me. Sweetheart, you are quite feverish."

"Oh, don't say that, Klaus; you must not be uneasy about me. I'm all right. I've told you before I could dance twenty-four hours without stopping, and not feel one bit fatigued. The people here would get a fine idea of me if I broke my very first engagements with them. And then dancing is my greatest pleasure."

She said all this in a coaxing, purring tone, and pressed her arm against her husband's, and gave him a pleading glance from her lovely eyes.

"Does it really give you so much pleasure?" asked Klaus, only half-convinced.

Kathi nodded her head and gave her well-beloved husband a coquettish glance; then she raised her fan before her face and hummed a line of the Viennese waltz song, which he had heard her sing at the Walhalla.

She was certainly irresistible, and her husband was looking at her with adoring eyes, when she made a little *moue* at him, gave him a tap with her fan, and was off, before he could speak, to dance the waltz-quadrille with the baron.

He nodded after her with a half-dazed smile, as she went away on Baron Albersdorff's arm to a distant part of the room.

"Did you recognize me at once?" asked Kathi, looking up into the face of the handsome, well-built, pleasant officer.

"At the first glance."

"And, naturally, you told your comrades of your discovery?"

"Haven't breathed it to a soul."

"Is that true?"

"I give you my word. I've only been in command here three days, and consequently have but a slight acquaintance with any of them. You can rely on my discretion, absolutely; so do not be uneasy."

"I believe you. Have you and Levini had a fuss?"

"Oh, dear, no! I hold her in as high esteem now as ever."

A figure in the quadrille here interrupted their conversation, but the thread was taken up whenever opportunity offered.

"And how does Prince Strusa get on?" asked Kathi.

"Excellently. I thank you for inquiring," answered the baron promptly.

"Levini told me how furious he was that evening—you know—when I did not come. He's over it by this time, though. He knows I'm married."

"Yes, he's over it. He's fully reconciled by this time," answered the baron cheerfully.

"That's good. Who's he devoting himself to now?"

"As far as I know, he is basking in the favor of your successor at the Walhalla, that pretty little thing, Toni Semmer."

"What, that little fool? I know her very well. We were engaged together at Klausenburg. Blonde Toni and the dark Strusa! They're well suited to one another. The prince was an awful bore."

"Now you've gratified your curiosity, tell me how it goes with you. How does life please you as a married woman?"

"Very well, indeed. I've made an excellent match."

"So I have heard, to my great joy. And is your husband jealous?"

"How can he be jealous, I have never given him any occasion."

"That's no reason why he shouldn't be. He's a handsome fellow."

"Yes, isn't he? If he'd been as ill-looking as the prince I'd have said 'no' very promptly."

"You are unkind, my dear madame. We've all spent a great many happy hours together."

"Well, and what then?"

"And the prince's face did not mar our pleasure then."

"Prince Strusa and Toni! Think of them together," said Kathi, quite unmoved, and she laughed.

"Can I take you in to supper now?" asked the baron, to whom Kathi's tone concerning the prince was not altogether agreeable.

"Yes," assented Kathi.

"Then, with your permission, we might take seats at once in the supper room."

"Very well," responded Kathi.

"Do you think your husband will object to your supping with me?" asked the baron suddenly. "I should not like to do anything to spoil the good man's evening. We had better ask him to join us."

"Don't bother about him. I can twist him around my little finger."

"Then you are most fortunate," answered the

baron, resolving that he would invite the husband, notwithstanding.

Kathi had found her old vivacious tone and manner again by this time, though they had seemed lost for the past month. The baron had neither said nor done anything very remarkable, but he had brought her old life, with its interests and variations, to her mind. How many weeks had it been? How long a time since she was so gay and unconcerned? At the same time she could not help feeling provoked that the prince had so soon consoled himself, and with Toni, too! Why couldn't Klaus, such a good-hearted man as he was, too, be lively and interesting like the baron? He had such a kind disposition, and yet he could not gossip. When he had told her he loved her to distraction, that she made him happy, and that he would always make her so, his communicative powers came to an end. That was all very well, very fine and proper. But it was too much of a good thing for every day in the week. She wanted to hear about the "languid Toni," as she called her, and the prince; how Levini was getting on with her lovers, and about many other interesting persons and things. And yet he'd sit and fret while she danced. Why didn't he dance himself, and not make eyes at her all the evening.

"You are all selfish, every one of you!" said

Kathi, aloud, supplementing her reflections on her husband's character by this abrupt exclamation.

Klaus, in the mean time, had been watching them closely. He had seen them talking animatedly during the breaks in the cotillion, and he had noticed how happy Kathi appeared to be. Now a feeling of anger came over him that she was remaining away from him so long with this man with the fatal name. And again the question arose, where had he heard the name of Albersdorff? Kathi must have mentioned it; she had evaded his question, and now she was chatting to the man like an old acquaintance. He could see her laugh heartily, while he, tired and impatient, sat holding her fan and handkerchief. He had drawn a different picture of the first evenings of their married life. And now his wife seemed unconscious of his very presence. All her attention was given to the ceaseless babble of a cavalry officer.

Albersdorff! Klaus gave a sudden start and pressed his lips tightly together. That was the name of the officer who was to take Levini to the Italian feast to which Kathi had been bidden. And now she was dancing with him two days after her marriage!

Klaus could hardly restrain himself. He felt himself grow cold around the heart. A sudden

oppression came over him, and he wiped the great beads of perspiration off his forehead.

"I will not be jealous. God help me! I will not be jealous!" he said, in a low tone.

The baron now brought Frau Bewer back to her place, and remained for some time talking beside her chair. Then he turned to her husband, and said in a polite tone:

"Madame, your wife, tells me that you sup here this evening; may I take the liberty of asking you to join me?"

"It would be a great honor, Herr Baron," answered Klaus, "but I fear it is too late."

"But, Klaus!" exclaimed Kathi sulkily.

"It is really too late, dear child," responded Klaus gently, but very decidedly. "You amuse yourself and think of nothing else. That is quite natural at your age. But I am much older and must be sensible for both. I am sorry if I disappoint you, but I think it wiser for your health."

"Herr Bewer is quite right, my dear madame," the baron hastened to interrupt, for he saw Kathi's feathers were ruffled the wrong way. "You are to be here for some time, I presume. I shall, therefore, have the pleasure of seeing you again, doubtless on the promenade. I come over from Mainz very frequently. My dear madame—Herr Bewer—I have the honor." And with a bow the baron turned on his heel.

"Well," said Kathi, in a sharp tone.

"Come, my dear child, it is time. Come, to please me."

"You are unbearable!" exclaimed Kathi.

Klaus was quite staggered by these words; they came like a blow in the face. They were the first unkind ones he had ever heard her utter—and this was the second day of their married life together! He could say nothing but "Kathi!"

She uttered no word further as they threaded their way through the brilliantly lighted corridor. She took Klaus's arm back to the hotel and entered her own well lighted salon, still without speaking.

"Kathi," said Klaus, with a world of love in his reproving tones, "do be reasonable."

"Leave me alone," she answered, in a whimpering tone. She went to her room, where the sleepy Gustel was waiting, and shut the door with a slam.

She felt the necessity of hiding the real state of the case from her inquisitive handmaiden, at the same time she must vent her ill feeling on some one, so she scolded the girl well for her awkwardness and stupidity. The philosophical Gustel took it all as a matter of course.

Klaus remained alone with his troublesome thoughts. He sat a long time without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. He only knew his

heart was sad within him. Suddenly he rose and stepped quickly into the bedroom. It was empty. A great horror seized him. He hastened to Kathi's dressing-room. She had thrown herself down on a couch, in her nightgown, with only a light shawl for covering, and was sleeping soundly and peacefully. Klaus stood over her and shook his head.

"She is a defiant child," he said to himself. "But only a child after all," he added forgivingly.

He sat down opposite her and watched her for a long time, and rejoiced that she could sleep so quietly and deeply. How lovely she was in her slumbers—how lovely and gentle.

CHAPTER VI.

"Kathi," said Klaus, as they sat opposite one another at breakfast the next morning, "such a scene as we went through last night must never be repeated. We must not vex each other; we are married, and have promised to gladden one another's lives, but not to sadden them. We must, in consequence, consider well the first weeks of married life, that we may tread the self-same path, and not allow slight differences to part us. It's easy to start wrong, and if a man goes one way and his wife another, unhappiness is sure to follow. We must never forget that our interests are one; and while we may have many differences of opinion—how could it be otherwise—still such differences should never result in quarrels, or even misunderstandings. It was no light matter for me to refuse you last night. You had danced too much already. You were greatly excited—more so than I had ever seen you before, and it was owing to this feverish excitement that you spoke so unkindly to me, I am sure. And then, and mainly, it was very disagreeable for me to have you meet and talk with an acquaintance of your

former life. You can easily understand that. About that old life I shall never breathe a syllable that shall vex you, but I want to be reminded of it as little as possible. Now let us think no more about it, and I will not be cross with you. You and I have many pleasures in life before us. Give me your hand, my dear."

During his long speech Kathi made no attempt to interrupt him. She sat listlessly gazing at the figured damask table-cover. Her face was utterly devoid of expression. It was neither sad nor defiant, nor distressed, nor reconciliatory. Apathetically she extended her hand at her husband's bidding, now, without returning its pressure.

"Have you nothing to say to me?" he asked, after a long pause.

"Nothing! When I'm out of humor I never can say anything," said his wife.

"But you should not be out of humor, child!"

Klaus drew her down beside him, and tried to convince her that her ill-humor was groundless. She let him talk, but gave him neither "yea" nor "nay." Perhaps she hardly understood him. Klaus generalized too much for her limited comprehension. She never went beyond positives. She knew what a new toilet signified, a journey, a ball, a supper with Levini, but when Klaus discoursed on the responsibilities of married life, on duty and conduct for the future, he

got beyond her level, and she was no friend of charades.

Klaus had been right when he declared to Leo, the first night of their meeting, that her eyes were proof her nature had not been spoiled. She was by no means a degraded or vicious woman; she was only undeveloped. She had grown up, as best she could in a depressing atmosphere, with no examples of a higher life before her eyes. No earnest and noble thoughts had ever come into her mind; all her powers of reflection lay dormant. Her father had clothed, fed, and sent her to the Volksschule—her mother had been dead for years—until she had acquired the compulsory rudimentary education required by law. After that she had to do what her hands could find to do to support herself, and to rise, if possible, above pinching poverty. The only duty which she fully understood was that she must fulfill the contracts which she signed, and her one reason for doing so was that she would lose her salary otherwise. Her personal charms, her inborn grace of manner, did much, however, to conceal this void in her soul. She was a more than ordinarily attractive woman, and she knew her power well, and used it with such skill that it became a dangerous weapon in her hands. If she wasn't quite sure of her ground, she would close her mouth, and she found the gift of silence, in con-

junction with her attractive personality, accomplished revolutions which no speech could have done.

But to Klaus, this silence was worse than any torture, and when she stared straight ahead, with a vacant, stolid look, he felt it was more than he could endure. He was willing to bear anything, willing to believe he was unjust, unkind, anything but to have Kathi sit with sealed lips. He had not married a lifeless statue. He would do anything he could, but he would not talk to empty air. Either he was right or he was wrong, but she must speak out and say so. Was he such a tyrant that all remonstrance died on her lips? Her silence implied that such was the case, but he must have open condemnation.

He reasoned with her, flew into a passion at her callousness, as he termed it, and said things for which he humbly apologized an hour later, but all to no purpose. She would never acknowledge herself in the wrong; in fact, she never thought she was; and Klaus, after vainly endeavoring to convince her that he was right, in the main, as to what their future life should be, and as to what it would be if she did not work in unison with him, would finally, with a sigh, abandon the attack until some new folly or fribble seemed to make it necessary for him to assume once more the aggressive. He always felt

ashamed of himself, too, she was such an innocent, pretty little thing, with no one in the wide world but himself. What business had he to harangue such a child about wifely duty? She was too young to know what the words meant.

Then when she had twisted him around her finger, as she had boasted to the baron she could do, a feeling of utter helplessness would confront the poor, patient bridegroom as he thought of how little he accomplished with all his words of wisdom.

"And they called me 'king' in Sumatra," he said once, with a bitter laugh.

Kathi, who had been silent at first from sheer inability to defend herself, later, when she found what a power against her husband her silence was, made a point to shield herself thus whenever he ventured upon any reproof.

Those first few weeks of married life were joyless in the extreme, but there were some hours of sunshine notwithstanding. Frequently, after an unpleasant scene, Kathi would go to the piano, and sing the charming songs of her own land—songs peculiarly adapted to one of her light, variable temperament; and Klaus, great-hearted, good-natured Klaus, would forget all else, and listen with his very heart to the sweet tones of the voice he loved, rejoicing within himself, the while, that she was his, all his. This thought

consoled him for many a weary, oppressive hour. He told himself that he had been too rough with her, he had made a false start, and was little more than an egotistical brute.

He had lived too long alone in Sumatra, and women and their ways were an unopened book to him. He must improve his manners. Kathi, poor child, she had done too much already. If she were different in many respects from what he expected to find her, surely that was not her fault. He could not expect the lark to sing with the nightingale's voice.

"I must build my house with the materials I have at hand. The principal thing is to raise the building, to have thick walls and a good roof. I have planned a different life, but it need not be a failure for all that. Kathi is not a bad nature; we do not understand one another, that is all. We must have patience, and learn to do so; then we shall be perfectly happy."

So argued Klaus. He blamed himself for all troubles, and always turned a deaf ear to the question whether Kathi was not the one, ever and always, in fault. Something was wrong, had been wrong, from the very beginning, and at times the thought would overpower him that no matter how thick the walls, or weather-proof the roof, his house was built upon sand. He would put the wretched thought from him, and declare,

for the hundredth time, that he, and he alone, was to blame.

It soon became clear to him that their first little quarrel had taken away all sympathy and comfort in their intercourse. There was peace between them, but no harmony. As a matter of fact each lived a separate life. Outwardly all was as it should be, but there was really nothing in common between them. Kathi could not step out of the circle for which her birth and rearing had fitted her, and this circle differed greatly from that within whose limits Klaus had been educated. The old Lübeck banker had been a man of austere life and strict morals, and the memory of old times, of his boyhood's home, was ever before his son in those early days of marriage. It was incomprehensible to Kathi that Klaus wished certain alterations in her conduct or manner, and was so captious concerning harmless deceptions which she had practiced all her life. She took the little seasons of strife much less tragically than her husband. It never for a moment entered her head that she was the one to blame. But she was not happy. True, the man at her side loved her with his whole heart, and gave her all the material comforts and luxuries which money could buy, but she confessed to herself, over and over again, she was much happier in Frau Milcke's stuffy little room, where she could have half

a dozen different admirers in as many days. Now, she was wearied to death. Twenty-four hours, day after day, with the same man—that was a little too much! Would she have to endure it forever? Other women had husbands who went off to their business for the entire day, which gave the wives an opportunity to come and go a little themselves, and a chance for daily gossip with their neighbors. She knew no women, and had no friends whom she could entertain for a quiet hour in her own handsome apartments. She had only her own husband, who, God have mercy on her, had nothing to do but bestow his company on her all day long. And he certainly did annoy her continually with all his remarkable notions. She never sat down for a quiet hour alone but he intruded himself upon her, and either made love to her, or began one of his prosy homilies, which almost set her crazy.

Klaus, who took Kathi into his confidence concerning all his business affairs, was not a little surprised at the interest she manifested in everything connected with Sumatra. The liquidation of his Eastern business was a much more wearisome matter than he had expected. The last mail had brought him a letter from his cautious and trustworthy manager, in which the latter said that he dared not take the responsibility of carrying out, to the letter, Herr Bewer's hastily given

instructions; his conscience, as a man of business, forbade it. Great losses would follow on immediate retirement from business, all of which could be avoided if more time was taken. He therefore begged Herr Bewer's permission for time, and also to be allowed to use his own judgment in such complications as must be acted upon at once. But above all things he wanted time; one year or two, if necessary. If such was allowed him, he would guarantee there would be no loss.

Klaus wrote his manager, giving him full permission to use his own judgment, and to keep him posted as to every turn in the affairs. It pleased the husband greatly to find his wife so interested in his business. It proved to him that she was beginning to feel that their interests were one.

"Who knows," said Kathi, with an earnest shake of the head, as she sat down on her husband's knee, "but what it would be better for you to go yourself, to see that everything is as it should be."

"But child," Klaus answered, with a good-natured laugh. "You have not thought what a long, hard journey it would be for you to take."

No, Kathi had not thought of that.

CHAPTER VII.

The autumn had come and gone. The young pair, after a delightful trip through South Germany, after carrying out numerous projects and abandoning others, decided to take up their residence in Berlin. Klaus had thought of Berlin as a possible future home, even before their marriage, and had decided upon a charming little house in Hildebrandtstrasse. So when Kathi, during her stay in Rome, was seized with a housewifely fever, Klaus immediately empowered Leo to purchase the house which he had already selected, and also instructed his friend to make any alterations or improvements which he considered necessary; above all, to spare neither pains nor money on the adornment and furnishing of Kathi's own rooms.

In those few weeks immediately preceding their settlement in their own home, Klaus was repeatedly and agreeably surprised by Kathi's interest. "Ah," he soliloquized, "I do not know her yet! She is neither shallow nor selfish. She has no thought for self, after all. How little she cares for the comfort or garnishing of her own rooms,

but how anxious she is concerning mine! My particular sanctum must contain everything that can be thought of; there must be nothing forgotten, nothing left undone! I must have all the requirements of an office, or, when my fancy inclines, of a lounging-room, so that I can work unmolested or take my ease undisturbed. There is more love, more gratitude, in my Kathi than I had thought."

Herr Bewer had made a wise choice in selecting Leo Schneider to transform his house into a beautiful as well as a homelike dwelling. Schneider had an artist's eye, and worked with a will in the furtherance of his friend's desires, so that by the middle of November the pretty, picturesque place in Hildebrandtstrasse was ready for its owner, and a week later Herr and Frau Bewer entered in and took possession.

Kathi was as enthusiastic as any fond husband could desire over the beauties and conveniences of her new home. How good he was! How thoughtful! and—to herself—how rich!

The first weeks of home life passed much more quickly than the honeymoon journey had done. There was so much to arrange, so many pleasant little duties to fulfill, and then Herr Schneider made them frequent and enlivening visits.

Kathi had judged him too severely, she now thought. He was a charming, amiable creature,

after all. Then his manner to herself had so changed. He was so respectful, so deferential, so anxious to hear her opinion on any and every subject. The words "gnädige Frau" dropped from his lips in such a natural, unconstrained manner! But the great charm, after all, was that the odor of the stage was inseparably connected with him. It was folly for her to think he would spoil Klaus or corrupt him in any way. On the contrary, their intercourse must be encouraged by every means in her power. He must become—it would take time and caution, of course—her discreet ally. He could plan evenings for Klaus away from home; could take him out to supper at Dressel's or anywhere else he chose, as long as he only took him away. Then, when Klaus had grown accustomed to seeking and finding his pleasures away from home, like other men, life would not only be endurable, but vistas of delight would open for her at every turn; she could see and be seen by her old friends without a husband always at her elbow, and, who knows, perhaps have an opportunity to make some new acquaintances.

So Kathi had a little perspective of her own, in which the figure of her husband had no place.

She had not been back in Berlin twenty-four hours before she was planning various deceptions which, she argued, it would be necessary to practice upon

Klaus. In the mean time she was gracious and amiable toward all. But markedly so toward the director of the Court Theater.

All of which made Klaus a very contented man once more.

One morning, a few weeks after their establishment in Berlin, he received a letter, which, in his present happy state, was most welcome. It was from his favorite brother, Wilhelm, and ran as follows:

HAMBURG, December 18, 1878.
Crown Prince Hotel.

DEAR KLAUS: I arrived here yesterday, accompanied by my wife, my two-year-old son, and a negress who is as black as pitch.

I shall only remain here a few days. My business demands my presence in Berlin, so we shall go to the capital about the 23d. My wife's sister, Bella, who has been in a pension in Dresden for the past three years, will meet us there and spend the holidays with us, after which she is to go back to Dresden to finish her term, and then return with us to her home in San Francisco. If this letter finds you in Berlin, and it is convenient and pleasant for your wife and yourself, we will spend Christmas Eve with you.

We are delighted to think we shall soon meet our lovely sister-in-law. My wife has fallen in love with her photograph, which you sent.

With a thousand greetings,

Your affectionate brother,
WILHELM.

Kathi shared her husband's joy in the good news which this letter brought. She had not thought to have so gay a Christmas. Now her beautiful home would be of some use. She could exhibit it in all its glory to her husband's kinsfolk. She would be a *bona fide* hostess at last! She asked Klaus many questions concerning her sister-in-law's sister Bella, of whom neither she nor Klaus had ever heard until they read Wilhelm's letter. Her husband could tell her little except that Wilhelm had married the daughter of a wealthy San Francisco merchant, a man of note in those parts and the president of several very prominent corporations, and that he had sent his young daughter to Europe to complete her education, which desideratum having been accomplished, she would return soon to her native land with Wilhelm and her sister.

Kathi was eager to have them become her guests during their stay in Germany, but Klaus explained that his brother would never consent to such an arrangement. Then she declared she would show the Americans what a German Christmas meant. She would arrange everything without any interference. She would plan for their guests' entertainment, but "Klaus must not meddle, not one bit," with a saucy shake of her head.

A half hour later Kathi appeared well wrapped in furs and bonnet. Klaus looked up in surprise.

"Where are you going so early?" he asked.

"Ah, that doesn't matter to you," she said, with a dazzling smile. "It's not good taste to be curious so near Christmas."

"You are but a child," he said, smiling. "You will not ride alone, though?"

"Gustel is going with me."

"Very well!"

Kathi gave him a loving hug, and he followed her to the carriage to give the coachman special orders to drive carefully.

His wife threw herself back in the corner of the carriage with a sigh of victory and relief, and Gustel sat diagonally opposite her mistress.

For the first time since the day of her betrothal, Kathi had managed to escape her husband's escort. His constant presence was suffocating to her. She might as well be in a pension, if she was to have him forever at her side like a great shaggy dog. She now smiled broadly behind her thick veil as she thought how she had finally eluded her keeper.

"Say, Gustel," she said suddenly, "do you think Frederick is a gossip?"

"Coachmen are usually pretty close-mouthed; but I don't know enough of Frederick to answer for him. You had better be cautious, however, my lady."

"I'd like to see Levini once again, but you

know Herr Bewer is so peculiar about many things. Then Levini lives in a street where there are no Christmas shops. So if I go to see her, and my husband should chance to ask Frederick where we were, I should be lost. Don't you see?"

"I do, indeed," answered Gustel, whose scheming brain was solving the difficulty for her mistress. "If you wish to see Fräulein Levini, I can write her a note, or see her and tell her to meet you at mother's to-morrow afternoon, for, of course, you'll have shopping to do every day now, and you can go to my mother's house in safety, for if your husband does hear of it, what's more natural than that you should stop to inquire about your old landlady, and leave her a little Christmas gift. You can visit with Fräulein Levini as long as you choose at mother's—or with any one else you desire."

There was a careless but sinister insinuation in the last words, which did not disturb Kathi in the least—she was too overjoyed at her prudent hand-maiden's suggestion.

"That's an excellent plan," she exclaimed excitedly. "You can see Fräulein Levini and your mother some time this evening and arrange a meeting for to-morrow afternoon at three."

"Very well, my lady. Is it really Fräulein Levini who I'm to tell?" asked Gustel curiously.

"Certainly, who else?" responded her mistress

tartly. "Don't get foolish notions in your head."

That day Kathi purchased all manner of useless articles for the two American ladies and her brother-in-law, and bought a wagon-load of play toys for the little boy; about all of which she made a great secret, obstinately refusing to let Klaus know anything about them.

The next day the scene of the previous one was repeated. Kathi parted from her husband gaily and affectionately, but as soon as she was out of Hildebrandtstrasse she ordered Frederick to drive to 99 Zimmerstrasse. Gustel preceded her mistress out of the coupé, and, after a cautious glance up and down the street, whispered to her "the road is clear, gnädige Frau," and a second later Frau Bewer had entered the old house, where "elegantly furnished rooms" were still to let.

It was a real happiness to Kathi to enter the well-known hallway once more. It did not seem narrow and dark to her to-day, it seemed only home-like; and when Gustel opened the door of her old room, Kathi sprang with a cry of joy into her former colleague's arms.

Kathi's friendship for Victoria Levini had gained ground since the days in which they had sung together, and the Walhalla prima donna was much surprised at her *ci-devant* friend's hearty

greeting, but not to be outdone, she responded with equal warmth.

Kathi found her old room changed a little for the worse, but it had a comfortable look to her, nevertheless.

Then for a long hour the two laughed and gossiped together with a freedom from restraint which was manna to Kathi's soul.

"And so our little blonde Toni is not a favorite? I'm not surprised. How could she be?"

"She can't hold a candle to you, my dear," answered Victoria impressively. She sings her numbers in the most lachrymose tones. She hasn't one bit of grace or *chic*."

"Of course she hasn't. I could do it all much better."

"There is no comparison between you! The prince has often said that. By the way, he frequently inquires after you."

"Well, he need not trouble himself; he is too poky. I told Baron Albersdorff that. I can not tell you what a surprise it was to meet the baron at a ball. We danced together, and my husband was jealous, awfully jealous, and wouldn't let us take supper together. Can you understand such a feeling? As if I couldn't have a chat with your old lover!"

"Does he annoy you often?"

"Yes, and no. He is as good as gold, but he

doesn't understand what a jolly time means. He buys me everything I want, and more too, but I get wearied to death of such a humdrum existence. I long for the old bustle and excitement. But only wait until the beginning of the new year, when my visitors are gone—I am expecting visitors, a brother in-law and his wife; she is the daughter of one of the presidents in America—when they have gone, I shall manage a pleasant evening with you now and then. Gustel's a clever girl, and I rely greatly on her. Now I must go. I can not annoy the coachman by staying too long, and I have a little present for Frau Milcke."

Fräulein Levini took this opportunity to borrow forty marks from her dear friend—she had left her purse at home on the table. Kathi lent her the money willingly and understandingly. It was not the first time Fräulein Levini had forgotten her purse.

Frau Milcke could not restrain her tears when Kathi presented her with a beautiful velvet bonnet and muff, and followed her benefactress to the door with many courtesies. Kathi drove back hastily to her own home.

"Well," exclaimed Klaus, to whom the time had seemed unendurably long during her absence, "have you finished all your secret expeditions?"

"Yes," answered Kathi gaily, while Gustel

removed her hat and mantle, with no change in her usual expressionless countenance. "Yes, everything is ready now. At least I hope so."

"Well, the heavens be praised for that! May I be permitted to ask where you were to-day?"

"Oh, everywhere—in all the shops. Then I took a poor woman a little Christmas present. Any more questions, my dear husband?"

"No more," said Klaus, as he drew her to him, and stroked her soft, black hair lovingly.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a cold, gloomy, gray day. A sharp, frost-laden east wind whistled through the streets, and the throng of Christmas shoppers hurried along, with red noses and streaming eyes, too short of breath to exchange the season's greetings with the chance acquaintances whom they happened to meet. Long before 4 o'clock, the lamp-lighters were hurrying on, from street to street, endeavoring to lighten a little the steadily increasing gloom.

Kathi was in a state of great excitement. Her husband had gone to the station to meet Wilhelm and his family. The former telegraphed they would arrive at half-past 4. Dinner was ordered for half-past 6, a dinner for five, and the first one at which the fine service of Dresden china would be used. Kathi had invited Leo Schneider also, notwithstanding her husband's suggestion that it would be better to have no guests at this first family dinner. She was disappointed, however, for Leo had an engagement at the theater that night. She went for the fourth time into the kitchen, and the fat. rosy-cheeked cook assured

her, for the fourth time also, that she need give herself no uneasiness, as everything would be satisfactory.

Then she went to her dressing-room, where Gustel was waiting for her, and dressed very slowly. She had chosen a simple gown, which fitted her to perfection, and exhibited her graceful figure to the best advantage. She resisted the temptation to wear some of her glittering wedding jewels, and contented herself with a corsage bouquet of Jacquesminot roses instead. Similar bouquets were to be placed beside the plate of each lady. She inspected her pretty rooms once more, and gave a satisfied sigh. There was nothing new or gaudy about them; everything was in most perfect taste—thanks to Leo Schneider, though Kathi gave him little credit.

Then she went to the window, for she thought she heard carriage-wheels; then back to the kitchen again, then to consult the clocks one after another, and to listen if her watch had stopped. Surely, they must be here soon. But no rattling of wheels disturbed the quiet of Hildebrandt-strasse yet.

Klaus arrived at the station five minutes before the arrival of the train. When he entered the waiting-room, he was so full of his own thoughts that he did not notice a tall, slender girl looking

at him curiously out of her great brown eyes. She had a lovely face, with a clear-cut profile, and a brilliant color, and golden hair. Klaus remained standing by the glass door, his attention attracted by the hurry and bustle of the porters and trainmen on the platform outside. After a moment's hesitation, the girl rose from her seat with a resolute air.

"Is this Herr Klaus Bewer?"

"At your service, Fräulein," answered Klaus, a little surprised, as he lifted his hat.

"I am Bella White," explained the young girl simply, as she reached out her hand to her sister's brother-in-law.

"You can go now, Fräulein," she said, turning carelessly toward a woman who stood at a respectful distance. "I have protection now." "I brought her with me from the hotel," she explained to Klaus, who stood staring at her, much surprised by her beauty. "I knew you at the first glance; your resemblance to Wilhelm is so striking."

As she said the last word, the heavy glass doors swung back. The train had arrived.

Wilhelm stepped down slowly from his car. The first person he saw was Klaus. Just the same old and dearly loved brother. Perhaps he had grown a trifle taller and a little broader. His beard, too, had grown darker, and he wore it shorter.

The two on the platform saw him instantly, and hurried forward. Bella gave him a hearty embrace, then hurried past him into the compartment to see her sister and nephew, over whom she was crying and laughing in a breath a moment later. The brothers embraced one another and then clasped hands without saying a word. Each was surprised at the changes in the other, and these grew more marked as they stood and gazed at one another. The sisters were still kissing and declaring that each had grown much more beautiful since their separation, when they were interrupted by Wilhelm.

"Come, children, come! Ellen, this is Klaus!" he said.

Ellen was not such a beauty as her sister, but she was a very pretty woman, nevertheless. Her face was so sympathetic, so kind and intelligent, that it was a pleasant one for the eye to rest upon. She was smaller than Bella, and fuller, and looked, as in truth she was, a few years older. Frau Wilhelm Bewer was in her twenty-sixth year.

Ellen greeted her brother-in-law cordially, and commented on the close resemblance between him and her husband. Klaus was much interested in the negress who followed with the child.

Chloe was indeed as black as pitch, and the brilliant red turban which she wore on her woolly

head emphasized all the more strongly the coloring of the skin. Everything about her glittered, the shiny skin, the magnificent teeth, the large, luminous eyes, which rested so lovingly on the little golden-haired child, clad in pure white, who rested against her expansive breast.

After the porter had secured their baggage, Ellen and Klaus, with the baby and nurse, entered the hotel omnibus and were driven quickly to the Hotel Royal, while Wilhelm and Bella followed in Klaus's coupé.

The ladies went immediately to their rooms to dress for dinner, and Klaus bore his brother company while the latter made such changes as were necessary in his attire.

"Now tell me all about your wife," began Wilhelm. "You can't know how anxious we all are to hear about her."

"You will soon see her and learn to know her for yourself."

"Judging from her picture, she must be very lovely, she has such a dainty, fragile look. But if she is good, that's the main thing, and loves you devotedly. Do you quarrel much?" Wilhelm asked the question in a careless, conversational tone as he searched for his dress-coat in his trunk.

"Do we quarrel much?" repeated Klaus. "Why do you ask such a question?"

"I have no special motive. I am only inter-

ested to know whether it is a family trait among the Bewers to begin married life with a succession of storms in order that unclouded sunshine may follow after."

"Was it so with you," asked Klaus, rather relieved.

"I should think so. We had more fusses in the first three weeks after our marriage than we have had in the last three years. Thank goodness, I've found it!" he exclaimed, drawing his dress-coat out with a vindictive shake.

"You are my senior in years, but I am yours in the marriage state, and I must say that, as far as my experience goes, every man is a fool during his honeymoon. More has been told about the glories of the honeymoon season than about any other period of human life; but it's all stuff! The wives are always captious and crotchety to an exasperating degree, and the husbands take the reins and become bullies for the time being in order to prove how wise they are. Then there are orders and tears, and sometimes a whole after life is wrecked because two young people, each kindly disposed enough, can't have a little patience one with the other. That's what I mean, Klaus. If you have not yet been able to overcome all the little difficulties, do not fret about them. They'll all come right. It belongs to the early days of marriage."

"Are you quite happy now?" asked Klaus.

Wilhelm, who had been pacing the room slowly while making his toilet, stopped before his brother now and said very earnestly:

"Quite happy, Klaus! Just as happy as a man can be; and I know what that means. I have the best and noblest of wives. No breath of reproach could ever touch her. She has a deep, pure soul, a full, warm heart, and a clear understanding of the duties and privileges of life. I say to you, as you said to me just now, 'You will learn to know her for yourself.' For she conceals nothing, neither would it ever enter into her head to make an ostentatious display. She is unassuming and good. So you can readily understand what a faithful, loving companion she is to me in my life. We understand one another at a glance, understand one another without a glance. A close and warm friendship unites us, in spite of much dissimilarity. And though we frequently entertain different opinions, we are always one in heart and soul."

"Yes, you are a happy man," murmured Klaus.

Wilhelm's half-jesting remarks on the honeymoon period had pleased him well. He had involuntarily taken every word home, and turned it to account in connection with those early and unhappy weeks when Kathi and he began their

travels. But, when Wilhelm paid so earnest, and Klaus could not but feel so truthful, a tribute to his wife's character and attributes, a deep sadness came over the listener's heart. He again drew a parallel between her and Kathi, but he had to force himself to do it, and it was most painful. He could not conceal from himself that Kathi was lacking in those virtues which are the foundation-stones of a happy married life, and which his more fortunate sister-in-law possessed.

When he questioned himself by what means Kathi had won his heart, there was but one answer, or series of answers: the beauty of her face and figure, her grace, the sound of her voice, the resistless charm of her Viennese speech. Of her nobility of character, her warm heart, her pure soul, he had never thought; and, as he was honest to himself, he could not think now.

"I should be sorry," he said, after a pause, "if our wives were not friends."

"There'll be no trouble about that," said Wilhelm briskly. "Ellen intends they shall be. She comes to your wife with a heart full of love and sympathy."

"But Kathi is a very singular nature; not really reserved, but, at the same time, difficult to approach. She is quick and sensible, but somewhat peculiar in her feelings—that is, I mean in her expression of them," answered Klaus.

"That won't make any difference. Young wives form friendships very quickly, and as your Kathi is younger and much prettier than my wife, she won't find any fault with Ellen. And if they become good friends at the start, they'll always remain so. If Frau Kathi is ever impolite, why, my wife can give her a good scolding and bring her around again, and we four will live in peace together—and Bella, too! By George, what a pretty girl she's grown to be in these three years!"

Wilhelm knocked on the door of the adjoining room and called out:

"Are you ready, Ellen?"

"Yes."

"And Bella?"

"She is waiting in the parlor."

"I forgot to mention among my wife's numerous virtues," said Wilhelm, with a laugh, "that she is always on time. I never knew her to keep me waiting. That was not inborn, though, but the result of my training," he added, with a self-satisfied, significant nod.

Ellen and the two men went at once to the reception-room, where Bella sat playing with the child, while Chloe stood back with a broad grin on her ebony face, showing her glittering teeth to perfection.

CHAPTER IX.

When Kathi heard the carriage-wheels before the door, she was in a state of great excitement. She rushed to a long mirror to give herself one more glance, and smoothed down the folds of her long, soft pompadour train, and then, well satisfied with her appearance, went forward to meet her guests.

The greetings were very cordial, almost hearty. Ellen was charmed with Kathi, whom she promptly declared to herself to be the most beautiful creature in existence. Kathi, on her part, was very gracious, especially after she observed that her American kinswoman, notwithstanding her youth, was given to embonpoint; decidedly so, she assured herself complacently. The young sister, who was glowing with youth and beauty, and bubbling over with vivacious spirits, did not please her so well.

At dinner Kathi sat next Wilhelm, who had, of course, taken her in; Ellen was escorted by her host, and sat at his right hand, while Bella was on his left.

The conversation was very animated at first.

The two sisters had not seen one another for three years, and the two brothers had been parted for quite eleven. So they talked of San Francisco and Lübeck, of Sumatra and Dresden. They all thought of something which they wished Kathi could have seen, and which they yet hoped to have the pleasure of showing her. Ellen good-naturedly strove to turn the conversation into channels which would interest her hostess, but Kathi had by this time decided not to be interested in anything. Ellen complimented her on her fine housekeeping, on the exquisite appointments of her table, and on the quiet elegance of her gown. She deplored the ever-increasing extravagance of Americans in the matter of dress, and wished they could learn a lesson from the more sensible Germans. To all of which Kathi listened without making any attempt to bear her share in the general talk.

Ellen asked which city she preferred as a place of residence, Berlin or Vienna, and whether the difference between North and South Germany was great enough to be noticeable to a foreigner, but Kathi only gave her monosyllabic answers. Ellen, who was not very musical herself, felt it a duty to resume a certain interest in such matters. She asked Kathi if she ever grew timid or lost her self-possession on the stage, if she memorized her songs readily, and many more questions, to prove

to her new sister-in-law that whatever interested her would become a matter of interest also to her husband's family.

Kathi answered all questions politely, but indifferently. She was neither rude nor embarrassed; she had simply lost all interest in her guests, or so at least it seemed. The four tried repeatedly to draw her into conversation, but all to no purpose; she was a passive hostess, separated by an impassable barrier from the rest.

Good-natured Ellen soon found a reason for Frau Bewer's distant manner which satisfied her. They were all strangers to her, and foreigners too, for Ellen considered Wilhelm a genuine American by this time. Then the little woman was a young housekeeper, and was anxious that everything should pass off well. She was doubtless of a timid nature, too, and was awed by their noise and laughter.

At the same time, Ellen felt it a duty to show good-fellowship and draw her hostess out. She referred repeatedly to "us wives," or "our husbands," or "we Bewers."

Kathi realized that Ellen was a pleasant, sympathetic woman, who meant what she said, and was kindly disposed toward herself, and she accorded to her guests, involuntarily, that respect which the uncultivated and undeveloped must always pay their superiors.

It was really very good of this San Franciscan to take so much trouble on her account, she reflected. But why did she do it? They all talked about such stupid, uninteresting things, and laughed, laughed heartily too, at absolutely nothing. Kathi made it quite clear that she had nothing in common with them, and that she had neither desire nor intention to meet them half way.

Something divided them, she could not tell what. Though she had to smile and appear happy, she felt she was "the fifth wheel of the wagon."

Fräulein Bella annoyed her greatly. How free and easy she was, chatting away with her husband as though she had known him her life long, and as if he were an unmarried man. Why was she of the party at all? How unconcernedly she laughed. That was the result, doubtless, of her education in a pension. A singular education, indeed, which permitted unfledged girls to laugh and make merry while married women sat by in silence!

The dinner was over. Each of the four had discovered, by this time, that he or she made one of a quartette, while the fifth was but a listener; but no remark was made, and the fiction that Kathi was participating in their mirth was still maintained. No one felt this as keenly as poor Klaus. Both ladies congratulated Kathi on the success of

her little dinner, and, as they entered the drawing-room after dinner, Ellen put her arm around the silent woman's waist, and said, with a pleasant laugh, "Now we matrons will have a little sensible chat all by ourselves," as she drew her down on the sofa beside herself, in a little alcove separated by *portieres* from the drawing-room.

Klaus, Wilhelm, and Bella sat at some distance from them, and, after the coffee had been served, the men smoked.

Bella chatted on quite oblivious of her hostess' disapproving looks. She had a thousand and one things to tell her brother-in-law, and countless questions to ask him: Whether her father still played cards daily with Mr. Jefferson? How far Wilhelm's new house was from the homestead? What kind of a looking man her friend Hattie's husband was? and was he as much in love with Hattie as she was with him? Then she told how many nice girls she had met in Dresden; how fond she was of some of them, and, she added unaffectedly, they of her; how well she had progressed with her painting, and what words of praise Director Hübner had given her when he inspected the two pictures of still-life which she had copied in the great gallery.

Klaus listened to it all with attention, although these things were in themselves totally without interest for him; but he joined in the conversa-

tion, and even joked Bella on having an appreciative audience.

It seemed almost singular that it was he who did the talking to-night, without reserve or constraint, while his wife scarcely uttered a word. And it was not with his brother that he chatted, but with this blithesome young girl, who, being eighteen years his junior, he regarded as little more than a child. Then, too, she belonged to another country, and was of another race. He had no feeling for her except one of passing interest as she was his brother's kinswoman. He was not blind to her beauty, but it did not wake within him any other emotion than that of the mildest admiration. Bella was to him a merry, simple school-girl; nothing more and nothing less.

How did it happen, then, that he could converse freely with this young girl, whom he did not love, and whom he had only known a few hours, while he would often be silent for hours, or, if he did speak, was stupid in the extreme, in the presence of his well-beloved wife?

It was simply this: Bella belonged to that class which understood the freemasonry of polite and refined society. To Kathi all this was mere shallow pantomiming.

Klaus gazed at Bella, too, with a puzzled feeling, hardly knowing what to make of her. She looked at him so innocently out of her great brown eyes,

with the same free, clear glance which she gave to the rest of the world—a glance which, though fearless, was always modest. In Kathi's company the fear was ever in his mind that she would say something strange or vexatious, or frighten him into silence by a sneer or a disdainful speech; now how carelessly and thoughtlessly he talked with this young guest.

Suddenly a horrible thought came into his mind. "God help me!" he said to himself, "have I been deceiving myself, after all?"

Great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead, and he rose precipitately from his lounging-chair. He would talk no more to this strange girl, who put vexatious thoughts of his wife into his head. To be sure, Kathi had hardly pleased him at table, but it was too much to expect of her to enter at once into an alliance with people who were utter strangers. Then, poor soul, she had had no advantages of travel; neither had she had those benefits which are derived from a careful education. He had not taken her from a celebrated pension. But she had other qualities, he mused, equally attractive—yes, others.

But what were they?

Well, she was, for instance, very musical. And the thought occurred suddenly to him, why should she hide her light under a bushel? With

the desire to make his apathetic little wife show what she could do, he hurried toward the curtained alcove. He had come at an opportune moment. Both ladies rose at once, as if the guard had announced that their train had reached its destination.

"Kathi, my dear, I want you to sing something for us."

"I beg to be excused," answered Kathi laconically.

"But why?" said Klaus slowly, in a surprised tone.

"For a very simple reason; I do not care to sing."

There ensued a painful silence.

"When I am not in the humor, I really can not sing," said Kathi, who felt some further word of explanation was necessary.

"Don't bother your wife," interrupted Ellen. "We women can not always do as we would like on demand. I understand exactly how it is. Kathi looks tired to-night. She will sing for us some other time.

"I have nothing more to say," said Klaus; and he added, trying to joke about it, "Here comes Fräulein Bella, and against three women one poor man has no chance. I thought we might have a little music, an Austrian song or two; and my wife, according to my judgment, sings them charmingly."

"I don't sing at all, or at least very little," said Bella, taking up the theme; "but if you want music of some kind, and will be satisfied with bad music as long as you can not get good, I will play you something, and give you a negro melody or two."

Klaus thanked her, as in duty bound, and opening the piano, led her to it.

As she struck the first chords, it was clear to him that she was no mean or untutored dilettante. She played with less force than might have been expected, but with a delicacy of expression and touch which belongs to the true musician.

Klaus complimented her politely on this new talent which she had hidden so modestly, and expressed some surprise that she was so fine a musician.

"I deserve little credit for it," Bella answered gaily. "After three years' constant attendance at the conservatoire, with daily practice, I certainly ought to know something."

She now began the prelude of a mournful but characteristic negro melody, and Wilhelm and Ellen, hearing something familiar to them both, stepped to her side. Klaus leaned against the instrument on the opposite side, and Kathi sat at a little distance.

Bella played the simple air well, and Wilhelm and Ellen stood by and hummed it, and finally

sang it out lustily, with nods and pleasant mimicry. Then, when they forgot the words, Bella, in her clear, pleasant, untrained voice, good-naturedly sang the remaining verses alone for her little audience.

After this she played one or two others without waiting to be asked, then ended with a Strauss waltz, which she rendered with such spirit and *verve* that even Kathi's unwilling feet involuntarily kept time.

Klaus had done his best to bring his young wife forward to shine as the center of attraction, rather than this artless school-girl, but all to no purpose. Bella, with her simple, merry speech and honest, direct manner, was, for the rest of the evening, the life and spirit of the little company, while Kathi sat by brooding, if not sullen. She was devoutly thankful when they finally declared their intention to depart. She said "good-by, until to-morrow," very cordially to her brother-in-law and his wife, but when it came to Bella, her manner changed. She felt that she had been ill-used this Christmas eve—how, she could not explain; but it was this stranger's fault, and she gave the merest touch at parting to the hand which was extended to her so frankly. Bella, all unconscious of the storm she had created, bade a pleasant, unconcerned "good-night" to all, and went away laughing.

No word was spoken between husband and wife for several minutes after their guests' departure. Kathi sank down again in the low reception-chair which she had occupied the greater part of the evening. Klaus, lost in thought, paced to and fro the length of the long room.

A servant extinguished several lights and carried away the coffee-service. But for the one lamp burning on the table in front of Kathi, the long room was in darkness.

"Well, haven't you anything to say to me to counteract the stupidity of this most tiresome evening?" asked Kathi at last, too irritated to longer conceal her ill-humor.

"It has made me very happy to see my brother again, after our long years of separation; also to meet his family. If you can not appreciate my feelings, I beg you to say nothing unkind, for I am in no humor to listen to criticism."

"Why, what could I say to annoy you?" answered Kathi in a drawling tone. "I like your brother very much, and his wife pleases me, too. But from that bold little minx Bella heaven defend me! It would be a good thing for them to send her to some institute for a few years more, until she was taught how to behave herself."

"I pray you, Kathi—"

"Of course you'll take her part, after paying

you such marked attention. That's the way with a man; only flatter him, and he—"

"Kathi!" Klaus interrupted angrily now.

"Whether you cry out or not, it doesn't change the facts. What I have seen I have seen! I know what's decent as well as another, and I know what to think when a girl makes eyes at a married man! So I tell you, once for all, it does not suit me, and I will not allow it again in my house!"

Klaus was speechless. He fairly gasped for breath as he stood staring at her.

"You don't know what you are saying," broke at last from his lips. "How can you talk so recklessly?"

"I know very well what I am saying. I'm not so stupid as you all think me. And this lovely Bella shall not find me such a fool, either! When she comes here to-morrow, I'll put a stop to her little game. I'll take her aside and tell her frankly what I think of her."

"Silence!" thundered Klaus.

Kathi looked astonished, and drew back frightened when she saw her husband standing over her with flaming cheeks and flashing eyes.

"Well," she said defiantly, "what is it?"

"You will say nothing at all to-morrow," Klaus said, in a quieter tone. "I shall take care that so unheard-of an insult shall not be given here."

He turned from her and began again pacing the room. Kathi sat perfectly silent. It was the first time Klaus had ever been angry with her. She gave him many glances when his broad back was turned, and when he faced her she dropped her eyes. She felt oppressed, almost anxious, and wished that he would break the silence or that she could think of something to say.

She had been a fool to vex him and make him so angry. But, after all, what was her crime? Only that she had good eyes and had seen this American trying to entrap her husband! She had right on her side, and would meet defiance with defiance. She'd see who'd conquer!

She rose and turned toward the door. "Where are you going?" asked her husband quietly.

"I am going to bed. I have no appetite for further discussion to-night."

"Please remain a few minutes. I have something to say to you."

"If you continue in the same tone in which you just spoke, I prefer not to listen."

"I will be very quiet."

"Very well; say your say, then. But I may as well warn you that you can not cajole me into thinking black is white. I am no fool, and can see as well as another."

"I shall neither affirm nor deny any of your foolish statements. I shall merely advise you. I

have noticed that you do not feel at ease with my kinsfolk, and your words just now have corroborated the result of my observation. You can not control yourself, and with your peculiar disposition, it would be very natural for you to make an uncomfortable scene, and such an exhibition I wish, at any price, to avoid. If you insult Fräulein Bella by your unjust and groundless suspicions, all intercourse will be, as a consequence, at an end between my American kinsfolk and myself, for my brother can not separate himself from his family any more than I can separate myself from you. I love Wilhelm devotedly, and any breach between us would wound me deeply. My feelings can not alter yours, nor do I expect they should, but you can at least heed my words and be silent; by so doing you will save me both mortification and sorrow. I now see that a happy, united life with Wilhelm and his family, of which I have so often dreamed, can never be. Perhaps our parting will be the less painful. But we must so arrange it that there will be little intercourse between my brother's family and ourselves while they are here. I will tell Wilhelm that there is nothing in common between you women, and that it would be just as prudent for you to see as little of one another as possible. He'll understand, and between him and me the old love will be as strong as ever. But, in the meantime, I must resort to subterfuge. I'll

write a line to-night and say you are ill and will probably be confined to your bed to-morrow, so that it will be impossible for us to receive them on Christmas-day. Will that suit you?"

"As you please," said his wife, sinking back into her chair. "It's a pity about all the pretty gifts!" Then, after a moment's thought, she added: "You'd better write to Leo Schneider to-night and invite him for to-morrow evening. It's ridiculous to have such a great Christmas-tree and only two people to see it."

Klaus looked at her a moment in wonder, then a sad, compassionate smile played around his lips, and he said quietly:

"I will invite him if you wish."

"And then we shall have a happy evening again," said Kathi, all her old gaiety coming back in a moment; "and I won't be capricious, and will sing to you to your heart's content."

"Very well, my child." He honestly meant to be as kind and friendly as ever, but the tones of his voice betrayed sorrow and discontent. For the first time the secret witchery of Kathi's voice and manner had no effect on him. He made no attempt to detain her longer, and gave a sigh of relief when she was gone.

The servant came to him a few minutes later to say that his mistress had ordered tea in her dressing-room, and should he serve him also?

"No!" Klaus answered. "I want nothing but the lamp in my study to be lighted, and at once too."

After he had written his two letters, the one to his brother and the other to Leo Schneider, he sat for a long time with his head resting on his hands; then, rousing himself, he sealed the letters, and said, with a bitter smile:

"She has not wasted much time! But I alone am to blame!"

He would post the letters himself. It was a cold night; the mercury stood twelve degrees below zero. But he shook himself into his great coat without a thought of the biting air. It was past 11.

"If my wife asks for me," he said to the sleepy man who handed him his hat and gloves, "say I have gone to post the letters myself. And you go to bed. Don't wait for me." And the vestibule doors swung behind him as he spoke.

Kathi, in the meantime, had drunk her tea by the glowing grate and had then put herself into the hands of her maid. She was more than usually talkative to-night. The taste of her unpleasant evening was still in her mouth.

"I'll be free from those tiresome Americans to-morrow, thank the Lord! I'd die if I had to go through such another evening. Frau Ellen is a very nice woman, I must acknowledge that; but

she gossips all the time, and asks no end of questions. She is so curious about everything, I believe the Americans are great gossipers. I haven't much to say about Wilhelm. You know how men are. But the young girl, Bella—I'll keep an eye on her! She's an affected doll just out of a pension —you understand the kind. She spends her time making eyes at the men. She has been at Dresden for three years, being educated and trained for a lady," added Kathi ironically, and she hummed:

"My Julia has been trained,
But how I dare not say"

"A most disagreeable girl," she continued; "but pretty, there's no denying that—very pretty. She knows it, too!"

"But she has such large feet, my lady," interposed Gustel.

"Has she?" exclaimed her mistress, delighted. "How did you find it out? I do hate big feet above all things."

"I took off her overshoes for her. Yes, she certainly has large feet."

"And broad and flat, I've no doubt. Yes, yes, she looks as if she had. That's the secret of her wearing so long a gown. Well, it's a great blemish to have big, ill-shaped feet;" and Kathi gave a sigh of genuine satisfaction as she looked down at her own. Then she got up and danced a step or two to show her contentment with what nature had done for her.

Finally, she let Gustel tuck her comfortably in bed.

She wondered why Klaus, contrary to habit, should have gone out on such a bitter night. Perhaps he was laying some kind of a trap for her. She laughed at the idea.

"The men don't catch us as easily as they think, do they, Gustel?" she said, with a little laugh.

Then she thought of the gifts which she had purchased—of the alligator-skin portfolio for Klaus, with its heavy silver corners, which had cost a small fortune, and of the smoking-set for Wilhelm. Well, Wilhelm would not get it now—why not present it to Leo Schneider?

Gustel agreed that the change of recipients was a practical one.

"And Bella, pretty Bella, gets nothing," said Kathi gaily. "I ought to send her a pair of shoes, though. Good large, comfortable shoes!" And she laughed heartily, while Gustel joined as merrily as her subordinate position would permit. Gustel was a wise girl, who never overstepped the bounds of her position.

"Just hand me a cigarette, Gustel. I never get a chance to smoke; but now that Herr Bewer is out, I'll get through one—or even two, perhaps!"

CHAPTER X.

Klaus went down Hildebrandtstrasse at a slow pace, notwithstanding the cold. When he reached the busier streets, he was annoyed at the bustle and noise on all sides. Theater-folk were on their way home, shoppers were still out making their last purchases for the morrow, and the lights were streaming from the shop-windows. He crossed to the Thiergarten and struck into the same narrow, lonely footpath which he had trod that wretched, oppressive night last summer. His lagging footsteps made a hollow, cracking echo on the crisp snow. The branches of the trees swayed to and fro with a mournful sound in the night wind, and their ice-covered arms had a glistening, spectral appearance as they reached out toward the pale, moonlit heavens. But the sorrowful man heeded neither the cold nor the weird aspect of his lonely surroundings. His thoughts to-night were sad, sad beyond belief. He felt that his summer evening's walk—how far away that August evening seemed now—was a happy one in comparison with the weight of woe which bound

him down to-night. Oh! why had he not been warned that night? Why had he striven so strenuously to stifle within him the prophetic voice which had risen again and again? Then he had satisfied himself with foolish, groundless reasons; he had assured himself, over and over again, that he was his own master and could do as he pleased. Well, he had done as he pleased, but surely he was not his own master! Oh! the bitterness, the inexpressible bitterness, of this hour. He had united himself for life to a woman who could never, never be his. It was not that she had been ill-educated, but that she was utterly incapable of education, either moral or mental. She did not understand him, and was a constant source of mortification and sorrow, but she was altogether unconscious of any shortcoming. She belonged to another race of beings, to a race which comprehended nothing of the difference between right and wrong, between duty and transgression. He saw it all now for the first time—now, when it was too late!

Had he been a thoughtless, inconsiderate fool? Had he taken this important step without due reflection?

No! He had given it deep and mature consideration. He had never supposed Kathi perfect, even in the first hours of his fascination, but he had given the credit of all her failings to her

unhealthy surroundings, surroundings which he felt must have forced upon her a certain degree of moral obliquity.

He felt confident that as soon as she was raised to a higher plane all such deficiencies in character would obliterate themselves; of her origin, or of the fact that what is bred in the bone must in time come to the surface, he had taken no thought. "All will come right," he had said repeatedly. "Every wife's worth is determined by her husband!" The future had given him no anxiety. All his terror had been of some unhappy developments from the past. He had feared something from the first, for Leo Schneider's careless words that first night had left their sting: "She hasn't waited all these years for you to come from Sumatra."

Now everything had gone contrary to either his hopes or his fears. It was not the past, but the present, which brought him such misery; and as to the future, God help him! he could not face the thought.

He had no feeling of anger toward his wife, only compassion and pain. She, poor, untutored creature, what did she know of life? Its duties, its obligations, were quite beyond her narrow range. On him alone lay all the blame. Even though she had a fine house, horses and carriages, jewels and gowns, her lot was not an enviable

one. He had seized her almost perforce, and taken her from the sphere in which she was happy; taken her into a new world, between which and her old life there lay an impassable barrier. It was no matter that she humiliated him, no one was to blame but himself; he had rushed in impetuously and carried her off, to her enduring unhappiness as well as his own.

The thought of the evil which he had wrought sent the blood coursing hotly through his veins. Naturally, it was impossible for her to be in touch with his kinsfolk. Naturally, too, she could not comprehend their habits or manners, though she had eyes to see and ears to hear. Ellen's kindliness, which shone in her face and beamed from her eyes, had made no impression; neither had Bella's simple, gracious manners and attractive personality, nor even Wilhelm's hearty brotherly greetings. Kathi's pleasure had been only a low, almost brutal one, to sneer at and make fun of them.

Klaus sighed deeply. "I have thrown my life and happiness into an abyss. I have been blind, but I have loved her very deeply."

The tears came into his eyes; they rolled down his cheeks, and falling, settled into icy drops on his beard.

"And we are only four months married—only four months!" His thoughts took another turn.

"All would be well yet, if she only loved me. Love would smooth out all the wrinkles in time. But she does not love me! Poor little woman, I have felt that for some time!"

He turned his footsteps once more toward the city, and soon was in the midst of the midnight life and stir. A poor child of about fifteen came up to him and begged him in a whining voice to buy matches from her. He felt sorry for the poor, ill-clad creature, and stepped under a gas-light to count her out some change; he found his purse contained no silver, so he put a five-mark gold-piece into the small benumbed hand. The girl thanked him effusively, and turned her great eyes upon him as she did so. He was startled by the strong resemblance her face bore to Kathi's, and he could not get the thought of this singular resemblance out of his head as he hurried on toward the hotel.

Before he arrived there, the hallucination had become so strong that he could scarcely convince himself that it was not Kathi herself who was the match-seller, and he had to rub his eyes and rate himself soundly for his folly before he could rid himself of the idea.

As he entered the hotel, he could hear the girl's shuffling walk just behind him and her sing-song cry to buy her wares. He would not have looked around again for worlds. In answer to his inquiry,

the porter told him that his brother and the ladies were still in their own rooms, so he went up at once and knocked.

Wilhelm shouted "Come in!"

The little group gathered within was the picture of peace and happiness. Ellen had the faculty of making any room in which she sat bear, in an indescribably short time, a homelike, comfortable look. There was nothing of the stiff, prim look of an hotel parlor about this apartment. Two large lamps, with bright shades, cast a rosy glow over the room.

Wilhelm, in dressing-gown and slippers, lounged back in the corner of a sofa smoking; beside him sat his wife, and next her, Bella, who had her arm around her sister's waist and her head on her shoulder. Both women had exchanged their dinner-gowns for pretty wrappers, and they were all talking and laughing in one breath.

"Hello!" cried Wilhelm, astonished at his brother's nocturnal visit.

"It's old St. Nick" himself," said Bella jokingly, as she arose from her recumbent position. The exclamation was apropos.

The great man in his long fur coat and cap, with his frost-touched beard, reminded one forcibly of the yearly visitor who steals down the chimneys "the night before Christmas."

Wilhelm arose at once and went toward his brother.

"Welcome, old fellow! But what brings you here at this time of night? Nothing wrong, I trust?"

"Nothing specially wrong! I'll tell you as soon as I get thawed."

"Take your own time."

Klaus had by this time thrown aside his coat and cap, and shook hands with the ladies, who went forward to greet him.

"Have a cup of tea with us; you need something to warm you," said Ellen, turning toward the steaming urn on the table; "and we'll ring for—"

"A cup of tea, but nothing else, I beg," answered Klaus.

Bella placed a chair for him and handed him the cup of tea which her sister had just poured.

"I had"—Klaus hesitated a moment—"I had just written to you, and intended dropping the letter in the post-box, when, being near the hotel, I decided it would be better to say by word of mouth what I had to say, for—my wife—is not quite—well."

It was fortunate that the intense cold had sent the blood tingling to his cheeks, otherwise the added tinge which his face assumed would have been very noticeable.

"Nothing serious, I trust?" Ellen was concerned at once.

"Nothing serious. But she will, in all probability, be confined to her bed to-morrow, and I thought, perhaps, it would be just as well—"

He stopped and stammered, and looked helplessly around.

"Yes, I understand," said Wilhelm's wife hastily. "Our first care must be for your wife's health. This weather is so severe; she did not look well at dinner to-night. She has overexerted herself, and must be kept quiet to-morrow. We would have liked to spend the holy evening together, but we are none of us sentimental, and the principal thing is to get Kathi well again as soon as possible."

"To be sure," agreed Wilhelm; "that is the principal thing."

"And," continued Ellen, desirous of putting Klaus at his ease, "I am just as well satisfied, for, to be honest, I could not let my baby be out at night in such weather, and I hate to be separated from him on such a holiday."

Klaus drank his tea slowly, and said, without taking his eyes from his cup, in a sad, heavy voice:

"I am sorry, very sorry, we can not be together."

"We'll go and inquire how your wife is the first thing in the morning," said Bella.

"Thank you, Fräulein, but you must not trouble yourself; it is really not necessary,"

answered Klaus, still without raising his eyes. "I will send a messenger early, or perhaps come myself."

"Come yourself, old fellow, come yourself. We haven't half seen you yet, and you must see our boy after his night's rest, when he is fresh."

"Thank you, Wilhelm. I believe I will come myself."

His eyes were still fastened on his cup. The three others exchanged fleeting, questioning glances.

"You can do me a little favor," said Klaus, rising and swaying backward for a moment as a haze came before his eyes. "Send this letter by the hotel porter to its address the first thing in the morning."

"It shall be sent at once," said Wilhelm, rising; but Bella was before him, and had touched the electric bell.

"I fear you are not well, Klaus," said Wilhelm anxiously, laying his hand on his shoulder.

"There's nothing the matter with me only a headache, and we all have headaches," said Klaus, striving, and failing, to speak carelessly.

Bella had in the meantime given the letter for Leo Schneider to a waiter.

Klaus watched it with singular interest, and when the man had gone, turned to get his coat.

"Oh, do not go yet," remonstrated Ellen.

"Yes, I must go. Do not detain me. I would rather go!"

There was such deep sadness in his voice that no one said a word further. Wilhelm helped him silently with his coat, and gave him his gloves and cap.

"It is much better that I should go," the unhappy man said after a minute, "much better!"

He said "good-night" to all, wrung his brother's hand, and was gone.

The three stood and looked at one another in silence for a minute.

"The poor man!" said Bella.

"It makes my heart ache," said Helen; "one can see how much he suffers."

"Don't trouble yourselves too much about him, girls," remarked Wilhelm philosophically. "I can see the poor fellow's wretchedly unhappy just now, but it'll all blow over. There's been a scene at home, that's all, and just now it appears to Klaus worse than it really is. Frau Kathi has flown in a tantrum over something, perhaps over your gown, or your playing, Bella, or over my bald head, or because some patties which we never missed were spoiled and consequently could not be served. Perhaps Klaus is the one to blame; he may have scolded her for not singing —I have no doubt he did. One word brought on

another, doubtless Kathi wept, perhaps capped the climax by fainting, and that is the desperate illness which has bowed the oak."

"No, Wilhelm, I believe it is something more serious than that."

"Well, let us hope, at least, that it isn't. If I judge my pretty little sister-in-law aright, it will soon blow over. She does not seem to me to be of a passionate temperament. She is, for a woman of her age, remarkably temperate and collected. When I think of her, she reminds me of one of Bach's preludes or fugues. She is a well-tempered piano with—"

"Without any sounding-board," said Ellen, finishing his sentence for him. "Poor Klaus, I can not get him out of my mind; as I said before, he has quite won my heart. I love him already like a brother, and as if I had known him all my life long. I can make nothing out of his wife, though. She puzzles me sorely. She said nothing foolish or out of the way—she hardly spoke at all, for that matter; but when she did open her lips, I had no indication from her words what her real thoughts might be. She appeared to me like a foreigner who did not rightly understand our tongue, and in consequence feared to go beyond the most simple sentences. I am convinced, however, that she is not a well-educated woman, and her early associations have, at least,

been unfortunate. She does not act like a woman whose social intercourse has made her sure of herself. Perhaps I have no right to say this after only one evening's intercourse, but before we left the dinner-table I found myself saying: 'She is without culture, and I fear without any education.' But she is a woman of tact, and in time—perhaps—we may become warm friends; her lovely face has attracted me greatly, and I mean to love her if she will let me. Poor Klaus, something serious has happened to make him so sad."

"Well," said Wilhelm, throwing himself back on the sofa, "if lack of education were all, much could be overcome with a quick-witted young woman anxious to improve; but if the defect lies deeper, if her disposition is not what it should be, then the matter is much more serious."

"You don't understand anything about it, Wilhelm. You speak as a theorist, just because you had the good fortune to marry an educated woman yourself!" said Ellen.

"Bella," laughed Wilhelm, "make your sister a courtesy, the finest you learned in Dresden."

"I'm quite in earnest," his wife went on. "We have an example in our own family, in papa's eldest brother, our Uncle John. He married a woman greatly beneath him; he thought he could elevate her, but the result was, as it invariably is, she lowered him—all because she was an unedu-

cated woman. He strove to bring her into society, but it was a failure, and through her he lost his social position; yet she was a good, industrious woman. Uncle John's whole life was spoiled by this marriage. Education is not everything, but it is much; without it the battle is lost. If our child were not taught to use his little legs, what use would they be to him? Only a burden as he crawled over the earth; and a nature which has not been trained and tutored must crawl, too, all its days. I know I do not give a perfect illustration, but you know what I mean. I have no desire to make women servants. I do not think it necessary for Bella to spend thirty or forty years in study, although it's to a woman's credit if she has the taste; but like consorts with like. A cultivated man's wife must, if she is one with him, incite him constantly to renewed efforts, and must interest herself in his life, and sympathize or admonish, as she sees the necessity. She must, if she has grown up in a refined atmosphere, have within herself, no matter how deeply hidden, the germs of faith, love, truth, friendship, womanhood—in a word, all which makes life worth living. The exterior circumstances of life amount to little. She can accommodate herself to the etiquette of the highest social circles, or to the plainer forms of simple, every-day life. I have known millionaires who could never acquire such

an education, it was contrary to their nature; and day-laborers, to whom, given equal opportunities, such attainment would be second nature; and the latter, if married to a millionaire, would have made a false step. All persons who marry without being equals, without meeting upon one platform, no matter in what station of life, make a *mésalliance.*"

"Hear! hear! She speaks like a book," said Wilhelm, laughing. "I need not tell you that you have convinced me. But, children, after such a peroration, we'd better retire. We've had a tiresome day—five hours in the cars, two at the dinner-table, one for music; so that now, after Ellen's eloquent sermon, I feel the need of rest."

Bella had said nothing since Klaus's departure; she sat in her corner listening and thinking. She rose now at her brother's words, and kissing them both, bade them good-night and went to her own room.

She dismissed the sleepy maid who was waiting to assist her, and undressed slowly, very slowly. She loosened and brushed her luxuriant golden hair. She spent much more time over it than usual, but did it automatically, as if she had no interest in her work. She was thinking on a subject entirely foreign to herself. The picture of a tall, handsome, fair man, with a sad, downcast, hopeless face and manner, was ever before her

eyes. Suddenly she closed her eyes, as if to put all thoughts of this stranger out of her mind, but they would come back; and once her lips parted and she broke into a smile. She shook her head impatiently now.

"What a stupid thing I am. Such dreams are sinful," and she threw down her brush and finished her preparations for bed in all haste. Then she kneeled and said her prayers, and, after extinguishing her light, laid her pretty head on the pillow and was soon fast asleep.

The match-seller, elated by her good fortune, was waiting in the Pariser platz for the big man who had been so free with his gold. As he emerged from the hotel entrance, she approached him and renewed her whining cries to buy her matches.

"Get out of my way!" said Klaus, in so harsh a tone that the girl turned in affright from him.

She stood staring about her for a minute, with a surprised look in her eyes. Then she made a quick gesture with her hand, and exclaimed, in a shrill, impertinent tone, "Geh zum teufel!" and turning went quickly in the direction of the Bauer Café.

Klaus hailed a passing drosky and was driven quickly home.

CHAPTER XI.

It was Christmas morning. Klaus could hear the children in the street chanting :

> "Peace and good will, good will and peace,
> In his dear name who loves us all."

He sat in his study, with his head between his hands and his eyes fixed on the green leather cover of his writing-table. How long he had been thus sitting he could not have told. Since yesterday a terrible change had come over him. He had been blind, but now the scales had dropped from his eyes.

For the first time he saw the fathomless pit which divided him from his wife; a pit which time could never bridge, because she had no love for him.

That was the secret of it all—she did not love him. He had never questioned himself—of late had not dared to question himself—but now the truth was burned into his brain; she did not love him.

He had had great hopes during his brief engagement that she would learn to do so, had not despaired even during their infelicitous honey-

moon, and hope had almost brightened into certainty since their return to Berlin. Now his mind's eye flew like an eagle's over his short season of intercourse with Kathi, from that first fateful night until to-day. She had rejoiced, honestly rejoiced, over her presents, and had given him profuse but superficial thanks; nothing else, as he now remembered.

She had been pleased with her new surroundings, her vanity had been flattered, and she had made many purring speeches — speeches which contained neither depth nor heart.

She, whom until now he had hoped to keep ever by his side, he saw, as he calmly reviewed their short life, was removed forever from him. Between her and him other figures crowded themselves before his view; he saw the open, happy face of his brother, the peaceful, contented smile of his sister-in-law, and the fresh, girlish countenance of the lovely young San Franciscan, with her roe-like eyes and her golden hair, and for a moment it was a great comfort to him that he would have others in his life of whom now to think rather than of his wife, who neither cared for nor understood him. He could not think of the future; he dared not think of it.

A servant knocked at the door, and, receiving permission to enter, handed his master a letter, explaining as he did so that a messenger was wait-

ing for a reply. Klaus opened it and read as follows:

"December 25, 1878.

"It is more than kind of you, dear friend, and of your charming wife, also, to remember a desolate old bachelor and invite him to share in the joys of a Christmas-tree and stretch his legs under your mahogany on so happy and sacred a holiday. But, alas! I shall have to decline, and for a reason which I will explain forthwith. An old friend and colleague of mine, Arnold Specht, of whom you doubtless have heard me speak, is in town for a few days; and, although I have no special engagement with him for to-day, I feel the demands of friendship bind me to his side. Specht is a charming fellow; I want you to meet him while he is here. With many, many thanks for your thoughtfulness, and sincere sorrow that I can not be one of you to-night,

"I remain regretfully yours,

"Leo S."

"P. S. The messenger is paid."

"Did you say someone was waiting for an answer?" asked Klaus.

"Yes, Herr Bewer."

Klaus shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, I see!" he muttered, understanding for the first that Leo was hinting for an invitation for his friend.

"Is my wife in her room?"

"She is in the drawing-room, mein Herr."

Kathi and Gustel were busy adorning the tree.

"Leo declines," said Klaus, going to his wife.

"Oh, what a pity!"

"Here is his letter."

Kathi looked over it quickly, and understood Leo's silent petition at a glance.

"How you startle one. He doesn't decline at all, only if he comes he must bring Arnold Specht with him. You have no objection to inviting him? He's one of our leading actors. I've always had the greatest admiration for him, and am delighted at the opportunity of meeting him. Don't look so stupid and doleful, my dear; just write Leo a few words."

"As you wish," said Klaus. He thought a moment. "I'd be glad if you'd write the letter yourself, Kathi; perhaps I wouldn't write cordially enough."

"Very well; I'll do it gladly."

She hurried into the adjoining room and wrote at once, crossing out three or four words, leaving a big blot, and writing *delighted* four different times. She came back to show it to Klaus, but he had already left the drawing-room and was once more shut up in his own sanctum.

The messenger took the note to Leo. The latter was pleased, but not surprised.

Kathi and Gustel went back to the trimming of the tree.

"I don't know what's come over Herr Bewer,"

said his wife, as she tied a chocolate cow with gay ribbons onto a low branch; "he's had the dumps since yesterday."

"All men have their humors. What else can we expect?" said Gustel, with motherly wisdom.

"I have been thinking—but of course it is folly—that the lovely creature with the great feet has—"

"You'd better be careful, my lady."

"What do you mean, Gustel, telling me I'd better be careful, when I have said nothing? You take too much upon yourself, and I will not put up with it," said Kathi angrily.

"Pardon me, gnädige Frau, you have misunderstood me. I only meant—"

"Well, well, that's all right, Gustel; you're a good soul. Tell me, Gustel," she added a second later, in a good-natured tone, "what had I better give this friend of Leo's, Herr Specht, for a Christmas-gift? He must have something as our guest to-night, but my husband has not thought of it; he never takes any responsibility. I'll give the smoking-set to Herr Schneider, but instead of giving the silver-clasped portfolio to Herr Bewer, I'll give it to the stranger, and my husband shall have the pair of Dresden shepherdesses which I intended for Ellen. I made up my mind last night to keep them for myself."

"I'm sure my master will be delighted with the Dresden figures," Gustel interpolated.

"They are very expensive," continued Kathi, "especially the one with the cap. You know yourself what care I took in their selection. Then I can give him that case I bought to hold the house-keys."

The tree was ready at last. It stood on a great table in the center of the long drawing-room. The table was covered with a damask cloth, and fruits, candies, cakes, and nuts were distributed over it in lavish profusion. The gifts for Klaus and the expected guests lay on it also, under the branches of the gaily decorated fir-tree. Notwithstanding Kathi's endeavors, the tree and table had an undefinable gloomy look not at all associated with the idea of a merry Christmas-tide.

For the past few weeks Klaus had been buying whatever his eye rested upon which he thought would please his wife. The large desk in his study was filled with packages of various shapes and sizes. He had rejoiced over his growing pile, and had ordered elaborate floral decorations for the table. These decorations were to be a secret until the last moment. The past twenty-four hours had driven from his head all thought of his order. He was now reminded of it by the servant's announcement that the florist had arrived. Klaus had lost all pleasure in the day; its celebration seemed to him now, brooding and unhappy, a very childish affair altogether. He told the man

to take all the packages from the drawers and place them on the table just as they were; it would not be necessary to remove the wrappings, he added; and to tell the gardener to arrange the flowers as he saw fit.

To the florist, who was an artist in his way, it was a difficult order; so many parcels, with their parti-colored paper coverings, gave the table an incongruous appearance which all his roses and camellias could not dissipate. He shook his head sulkily as he strove to cover the most unsightly with his leaves and blossoms, and give the table a gala-day appearance.

The guests were invited for dinner at 6. The drawing-room was not to be opened until 8.

Leo and Arnold Specht appeared, with that punctuality which is part of the education of all true actors, at just 6. Leo thanked Herr and Frau Bewer profusely for showing so much hospitality toward his friend and himself; it had surprised and touched him.

Herr Specht, too, made his little speech; he had not deserved such an honor! Then he smiled and bowed low, in token that words were not given him in which to express all he felt.

Arnold Specht was a handsome man. He was about forty years of age, and tall—though he had attained by no means to Klaus's gigantic proportions—slender, and gracefully formed, with small

feet and white, well-kept hands, with long, perfectly trimmed nails. His bearing was that of a man who recognized the importance of looking well on all occasions, and who was always prepared for scrutiny through the lorgnette. His chest was broad, his arms well developed, and he carried his head with an air of complacent self-consciousness. His skin was almost brown, his eyes were black and full of expression, his hair, which was dark too, was carefully curled by a *friseur*, and one Hamlet-like lock fell over his forehead. His voice, which he had had carefully cultivated after the mode of Emil Devrient, was full and soft. He spoke slowly, distinctly, and rolled his *r*'*s*.

As soon as he had sufficiently recovered from the emotions which overpowered him, he could scarcely find words enough in which to express his thanks.

"And to think that this day, of all others, should bring me such good fortune! Who can laugh at the beautiful legends of childhood concerning Santa Claus? Have not the portals of a lovely palace been opened to me by a Christmas fairy?"

He was deeply moved, his voice trembled, he could almost have wept, but it was too early in the evening.

Klaus greeted his guests cordially, and strove

to hide his own sufferings, but Leo's sharp eyes perceived at once that something was amiss. He took his host aside.

"What's the matter with you, old boy? You seem out of sorts."

"I've been suffering with my head terribly since yesterday," Klaus explained, and, as Kathi and Herr Specht approached them at this moment, he added, raising his voice, "I must warn my guests in advance and crave their indulgence, for I will not be a very entertaining host this evening. I am decidedly under the weather."

Specht was so deeply moved by this communication that he looked as if he had lost his last friend.

"My wife will endeavor to compensate for all my shortcomings. I beg you will not be disturbed by my taciturnity to-night—I'll strive not to interfere with your gaiety. And now let us go to dinner. Herr Specht, will you be good enough to escort my wife?"

Specht made a profound bow, and, with his sweetest smile and most languishing look, offered his arm to Kathi.

And the hostess—could this gay, rosy-cheeked, laughing girl be the same as she who, so silent and listless, so apathetic and almost sneering, had sat in the selfsame place only twenty-four hours before? Never had she looked so lovely, so winning, so fascinating, as to-night.

By the end of the third course Specht had laid aside his semi-sentimental mask for a more passionate, fiery manner. His great eyes flashed as he laughed and talked and drank his host's choice vintage.

"Ah," he exclaimed, after once more draining his glass, "a draught for a king! And now, my friends," and he arose, while his face assumed the artificial happy expression which is thought necessary for the toast-giver, "while the wine rejoices our hearts, why should we not prove how joyous and gay we are? My heart is full of gratitude toward our charming host and hostess, to whom I was but one short hour ago an entire stranger, but whom I now number among my chosen friends. But when the heart is full—what is it, Leo?" and he interrupted himself.

Leo, who had not moved, only raised his eyebrows.

"And when the heart is full—the words which are burning within me can not find expression."

He made an effective pause, looking profound and sad the while.

"I will not say that I shall ever hold this blessed Christmas-night among my most sacred memories; I will not say that the best Christmas-gift which a poor man, Hamlet-like, could lay on this hearth would be his blessing and prayers for the well-being and prosperity of all within

these walls; I will not speak of the goodness of our host, who stands steadfast and true, like the watch on the Rhine; I need not speak of the maidenly reserve and charming dignity of this young wife, who moves me one moment to laughter, and the next to pray heaven to protect her ever and keep her always so pure and gracious as now—I will say nothing of all these, I will only ask you to remember them when we drink to the long and happy life of"—a pause, he had already refilled his glass—"Herr and Frau Bewer."

The glasses clinked together. Leo noticed with disagreeable surprise that as Arnold's glass touched Kathi's their fingers also touched, and that he gave an insolent, admiring glance at the "pure and gracious" wife whom he had just extolled.

After this Herr Specht sat down, well contented with himself. Upon thinking it over, he discovered that his toast had been not only brilliant but intellectual, original too, and that pleased him greatly.

Kathi was in raptures over this stranger's eloquence.

Leo looked at his friend rather quizzically; evidently he regarded the performance as mediocre in the extreme. Klaus, after listening to the first fulsome sentence or two, paid no further heed to

his guest's panegyric, but sank again into a depressing, hopeless reverie.

By the time the roast was brought on, the other three were in the gayest of gay humors, and Leo and Herr Specht vied with one another in saying sparkling nothings. Their host was absent-minded and indifferent, but that fact did not lessen the handsome actor's silent but expressive homage to the young wife. Specht was a fine ventriloquist, and when he saw how ready Kathi was to laugh at anything he said or did, he went through the whole gamut of mimicry, from the crowing of a cock to the whistle of a locomotive, all of which greatly delighted his lovely hostess, who laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks. "When had she been so well amused before?" she asked herself, with a satisfied sigh. When Arnold ended his performances by singing, or rather humming, the song of the fly who returned ever and anon to the nose of the intoxicated sleeper, Kathi felt that she was enjoying the refinement of pleasure, and was tempted to throw her arms around this captivating creature who did so much for her entertainment.

Leo had enjoyed his dinner heartily, and was well satisfied to let his friend play the mountebank; but when the coffee was served, he felt his hour had come and that he could now conduce to the general entertainment. He had drank enough wine

by this time to undertake a juggler's trick, which he performed by balancing his cup of mocha on the thin, narrow-rimmed saucer. He was loudly applauded by the two attentive watchers, but to Kathi his slight-of-hand achievements were infinitely less amusing than anything which Arnold Specht said or did.

Leo and his confrere told innumerable anecdotes as they lingered long over the "walnuts and the wine," and Klaus sat silent and unhappy, as Kathi had done the previous evening.

And this was a Christmas-feast in his own house! And these were his guests! Two comedians and —God help him—his own wife! And his own kinsfolk, his brother, for whom his soul yearned, from whom he had been separated by distances both of time and space, were within a stone's throw of his house, and yet he could not have them with him! "Thank God!" he muttered, looking at the flushed, excited faces of his companions— "thank God that I can not!"

Then the old anthem so familiar in his childhood days came back to him, fraught with memories of his boyhood in the old city of Lübeck:

> The Christmas-bells are ringing,
> This joyful holy night,
> And heavenly hosts are singing
> Of peace and hope and light.

"What is the matter with you, Klaus?" his

wife exclaimed suddenly. "I never saw you look so doleful before! Are you angry with us for enjoying ourselves?"

"On the contrary, Kathi, I am very glad; but, as I told you before, I am not well."

His wife went to his side, and said in a low tone, "You are thinking of your people; I can see that. Why not go and spend a few hours with them. I am perfectly willing to have you. You are not enjoying yourself here, and a chat with your brother will make you feel better. You can take the child the toys I had bought for him. I confess I forgot all about them until this moment. The servants are lighting the tree now, and in five minutes we will adjourn to the drawing-room; then, after you get your gifts—I haven't very much for you, my dear—you can slip away, and I will make it all right with the guests."

With this she turned again to her guests.

Klaus drew a sigh of relief that so pleasant a prospect had been opened before him. He could not sit all evening and listen to the chatter and laughter which was going on around him; he had realized that for the past hour.

At the same time, such is the inconsistency of human nature, he felt a sharp heart-pang at his wife's evident eagerness to get rid of him. It was very apparent that on this holy Christmas evening, when all Germany was holding happy fam-

ily reunions, he, the husband, was being turned away, as it were, from his own hearth-stone.

Leo and Arnold were charmed with their lovely gifts. The latter protested over and over again that it was too much; he had never hoped to own so exquisite a portfolio; and—as he opened and closed it repeatedly—to come from the hands of so gracious and fascinating a hostess, was too much—too much!

Klaus thanked his wife for the Dresden figures, and listened good-naturedly while she explained how rare in design and how expensive they were.

Then Kathi began a series of exclamations, in divers joyful keys, as she found the presents for herself, which the florist had distributed under the decorations. She turned finally to thank her husband, but he had disappeared.

"Ah, so he's gone! Perhaps it's just as well," she muttered under her breath. And turning to her guests, she said:

"You really must excuse my husband; he is not well, and has gone to spend a quiet evening with his kinsfolk. Now we can have a good time. Go on with your mimicry, my dear Herr Specht; it is so delightful.

Herr Specht was not affected one way or the other by the announcement of his host's departure; he always enjoyed himself, and cared little at whose cost. He did his duty conscientiously

as an actor, and that was all any man need expect from him. Leo, however, was painfully affected by his friend's departure. It boded no good. Something was wrong, he felt certain!

Arnold acted a little and mimicked a little, cast tender glances between times at his hostess and overwhelmed her with compliments, which she received with smiles and dimples. Leo related, with many dramatic touches, a story of three Polish Jews, at which Kathi laughed innocently and heartily enough.

Then Schneider opened the piano and played an accompaniment for his friend, who sang, with feeling, "I wish I were a moonbeam bright." Kathi accompanied him in the last verse, and then, being urged, sang half a dozen of her Viennese music-hall ballads, as she alone could sing them.

So the time passed, with song and laughter and many a glass of sparkling *sec*.

Finally Kathi exclaimed excitedly:

"Play us a waltz, Leo; a lively waltz! We'll have a dance."

The tables were quickly moved aside, rugs lifted, and chairs crowded into corners. Then began the waltz.

The porcelain and glass on the cabinet rattled as Kathi and Arnold whirled round and round, Kathi with burning cheeks and sparkling eyes,

and her partner with bold, admiring glances which never left her face as he held her in a tight embrace. Finally Arnold kissed her.

"What on earth possessed you to do that?" asked Kathi, without halting in the waltz.

"Because I love you, Kathi," he whispered in her ear.

"That's all right; but be reasonable. What will people think? There's someone standing at the glass door now, I do believe."

Leo had seen the kiss, and was justly incensed. He was very loyal to Klaus, and felt he was responsible for fair play during the absence of his host. He knew this was neither the time nor the place for remonstrances, so he played on until he had finished the waltz.

"Go on! go on!" shouted the dancers.

"No; I've finished it now. Specht acts like such a fool, I'm not going to play any more!"

Kathi released herself quickly from her new admirer's arms and hurried toward a small reception-room at the right of the drawing-room. Surely she had seen a face there which had only disappeared since she had ceased dancing. She caught her breath for a moment, and then went quickly and resolutely through the smaller room, where she caught sight of the faithful Gustel creeping along silently toward the servants' hall.

"Thank God, it's you! You've given me a

nice fright! Listen to me, Gustel. You go in the corner room and sit by the window. When you hear the master coming—he went in the coupé, I think—let me know at once—at once. I'll give you something beautiful to-morrow."

That was a fair bargain, Gustel reasoned, as she went, with a quiet smile, to do Frau Bewer's bidding.

Leo, in the meantime, had been giving a few words of advice to his brother actor regarding his lover-like antics.

"In the first place, it is not agreeable for me to have the man whom I introduced into this house to-night, and for whom, by so doing, I stand sponsor, kiss the mistress when her husband is away. In the second place, it is unwise, very unwise. My friend Bewer is not the man—and I know him well—to stand on etiquette. You have seen him. He's quite up to the military standard. He has been out of the country these ten years, where European culture is unheard of. You understand? If he came in here, he'd simply strike you down with one blow."

The opening of such a perspective did not fail of its purpose.

Arnold felt no need either of the lover-like or sadly sentimental mask while alone with his friend. His face was honest enough, though rather perplexed.

"Ah!" he said slowly. "You think he'd strike from the shoulder, without any preliminaries?"

"Without any preliminaries. So put an end to it all."

"Yes, it would be wiser, I suppose," Specht assented reluctantly.

Kathi came back now in high spirits, her cheeks flushed and her voice loud and excited.

"Now give us a galop, Leo."

"I'm awfully sorry, but I'm tired to death."

"Not if I beg you to play for my pleasure?"

"Not even for your pleasure."

"How disagreeable you are this evening! Well, we can get on without you. Come, Herr Specht! I'll sing the waltz."

As she spoke, she put her hand on the comedian's arm and leaned against his shoulder so that it was impossible for him to excuse himself unless he were positively rude. All heart for this little pastime was gone from him, however.

Even when her voice failed her, and she was too breathless to do more than hum the air, Kathi kept on with the mad dance, leaning her weight each minute more heavily upon her partner.

"The master! the master!" shouted Gustel, suddenly, at the door.

The words gave Arnold Specht an electric shock. The dance had given him no pleasure whatever. As his energetic partner was whirling him round

and round, Schneider's warning was re-echoing in his brain, and now the maid's words struck terror to his heart. The perspiration was running down his hot cheeks, and he was breathless and exhausted. The deep red of his face turned to an olive-green and his legs trembled beneath him.

Kathi threw herself instantly into an easy-chair, exclaiming nervously:

"I don't much care what happens now. It is all the same to me!"

Leo alone was composed.

He had but one anxiety, and that was to spare his old friend as much as he could. He called to Arnold sharply to help him move the piano into its old place, put the chairs in order as well as he could, and closed the door into the dining-room.

Kathi, in the meantime, had taken a piece of ice from the champagne cooler and was striving to cool her burning cheeks and forehead with it.

Klaus had passed a really enjoyable hour in the company of his brother and his family. He had been refreshed in spirit, and for the nonce had forgotten his own deep grief.

They had chatted over old times; the brothers had recalled many amusing incidents of former Christmas-nights, and then had talked tenderly of their father, the unbending old merchant of Lübeck, to whose stern, upright character they had learned to do more justice since they them-

selves had been buffeted around the world. Bella had played for them—some soft, tuneful melodies which accorded well with Klaus's depressed state of mind.

"My God! Kathi, what is the matter with you? What has happened?" her husband exclaimed, his eye resting on her as he entered the room.

"What should be the matter with me?" answered Kathi in a shrill falsetto voice. "Nothing at all; we have had a little dance, that is all."

Klaus measured the two men with a cold glance. As his eye caught the figure of the tall, handsome comedian, who stood leaning against the piano with an assumed air of boldness and ease, a feeling of disgust, which he could scarcely conceal, came over him.

"So you've been dancing, have you?" he said quietly, recovering himself with a powerful effort. "Well, I'm not fond of dancing myself, but I'm glad to know that my absence has not in any way affected the evening's pleasure. Won't you be seated again, gentlemen; I do not want to chase you away by my return."

"We had risen to make our adieus before you entered," explained Leo, who felt no whit more comfortable than Arnold, although he knew he had done nothing of which to be ashamed.

"Yes, we must indeed be going; it is late." Herr Specht spoke with a visible effort.

"You must not be angry with me," said Leo, in a voice which trembled from emotion. "I have done nothing to make you so, as God is my judge—"

"I believe you, Leo."

"You must believe me. It was terrible to me when you looked at me just now as if you thought—"

"I thought nothing, Leo."

"I am honest to my friends, Klaus, and you are one of the oldest. As heaven is my witness—"

"That's all right, Leo; that's all right. If you have anything to tell me, keep it for another time. It is, as you say, late. Good-night, gentlemen."

He extended his hand to Leo, who pressed it fiercely enough to make the strong man wince.

"Believe me," Schneider repeated, "I am your friend! Good-night."

Arnold made a set speech to Kathi, who stood gasping and breathless, as he bowed over her hand, then he turned to shake hands with her husband also. It was evident that Klaus did not see the extended hand, for he bowed his guest out politely, but without any friendly hand-clasp. The men carried their expensive gifts with them, but their possession gave them little pleasure now.

Klaus stood gazing critically at his wife for full five minutes. Her cheeks, in fact her whole face, burned with a deep red; her nostrils were dilated,

her eyes dim, and her hair in terrible disorder; while her bosom heaved and her breath came in gasps like one who is asthmatically affected. Klaus thought of his sister-in-law, from whom he had just parted; of her deep, clear eyes which gave him so honest a glance; of Bella, her noble beauty and calm, dignified manner.

He turned from Kathi as from a strange being, and said no word.

"Klaus! Klaus!" she called after him.

If he heard her at all, he paid no heed to her words. He passed out of the drawing-room, and a second later he had turned the key in his own bedroom door. He sat for a long time on the side of his bed after he had partially undressed, thinking of nothing in particular, and with no feeling either of anger or excitement. The little trifles which had occurred during the evening made a greater impression upon him than the one matter of moment. He smiled over Leo's friendly and earnest assurances, over the Dresden figures, the girl with the cap and the shepherd with the red cheeks; but to Kathi he gave no thought. A melody was running through his head; he couldn't get the words, neither could he remember where he had heard it. Had Bella played it at his brother's to-night? Was it a song from the far-away days of his childhood? Long after he had put out the light and gone to bed it still hummed through his brain.

Why would not the words come to him? It was a sad song, he felt sure of that, and yet the words failed him.

Finally, when he did sleep, he had wretched, disquieting dreams. He had a quarrel with some men who waylaid him on a journey. His chief antagonist was a tall, dark fellow with a Hamlet-like lock, and long nails on his little fingers, and he rolled his *r's*. But it was not Herr Specht, it was Prince Demeter Strusa! He looked like an actor, and he offered his arm to Bella, who was under Klaus's protection, and wore a cap just like the Dresden figure. Klaus was furious at the prince, but Leo Schneider, looking just like the shepherd, stepped to his side and swore with a thousand oaths he would always be his friend. A crowd of idlers gathered around Klaus, and when he turned to look for his friends none were to be seen.

Bella, in some inexplicable manner, had been taken from him, and he was left alone, alone!

He lifted a stone from the street to fling at Prince Strusa. The noise, like the breaking of porcelain figures, awakened him with a start. The melody was ringing in his ears!

CHAPTER XII.

It was the middle of February. The social life of the German capital was at its height. Wilhelm Bewer, with his wife and sister, had been introduced, through the medium of the ambassador from the United States, into many charmed circles. Wherever they went the Americans were cordially received, and the women of the party much admired and petted.

During the winter they had taken two short journeys, one to Griefswald and the other to Lübeck, neither of which had given Wilhelm much pleasure.

Gottlieb, who was deep in some scientific work, was very glad to see his brother and meet his family, but he did not know what to do in the company of women; he was totally unaccustomed to them, and was, in consequence, awkward and shy. He was glad to shake them all cordially by the hand at parting, and after wishing them "godspeed," to return with all haste to his desk.

The visit to Lübeck was even more uncomfortable. The elder brothers could never forget how wild and troublesome Wilhelm had been in his

boyhood. They could not dissociate this American, as they dubbed him to each other, from the youth who had so vexed their father, and who had been finally sent to the New World as a *dernier ressort.* But their most potent feeling was the knowledge that they had wronged him, just as they had wronged Klaus, and this knowledge gave an added degree of coldness to their intercourse with their young brother and his family. Wilhelm, warm-hearted and impetuous, found all this unendurable, and shortened his visit to one day, though he had expected to remain in Lübeck a week. He was so disgusted at his reception there that he gave up his intended visit to his sister at Husum and returned at once to Berlin, where Klaus, the only real kinsman he had, was to be found. The ladies also were well satisfied to get back to the capital.

When Wilhelm announced one day that his European business was satisfactorily concluded, and they must turn their faces homeward now, they were all distressed at the thought. His wife and Bella had enjoyed to the utmost the society into which they had been so auspiciously introduced, but their chief regret was in leaving Klaus, whom they had seen daily, and who by this time seemed to belong to them.

Of Kathi no word had been spoken for some time. After they learned, through Klaus's eva-

sions and excuses, that they were not to be invited to his house again, and were not expected even to make a brief call, they decided among themselves that it would be better to say nothing further about the lovely sister-in-law who interested them so much. In fact, before they left Berlin, they had almost forgotten that Klaus was married at all.

But Klaus had not forgotten it. He lived under the same roof with Kathi, they ate their meals together, and as far as the letter of the law was concerned, they were man and wife living in perfect accord.

All scenes, either sorrowful or exciting, were at an end. Klaus was thoughtful and kind. He gave over lecturing or reproving; there was nothing to be gained by admonition, he was confident of that now. He attended to all his wife's creature needs; he took her to the opera and theater, bought any gewgaws for which she expressed a desire, and strove to make her life as happy as possible. He only prayed that she would do nothing to stain his good name; that was all he had left, and he was jealous of his honor.

Kathi was well content with the turn affairs had taken. She had much more time to herself now; could drive to Frau Milcke's daily, and have her long confidential chats with Fräulein Levini, to whom she repeatedly gave the assurance that she

was as happy as happy could be, and had made the best match in Berlin. Kathi was fully convinced of this herself; and after she had accommodated her friend with money, usually silver, but occasionally gold—Victoria was always forgetting her purse—she would throw herself back in her carriage and feel, as she was driven away, that she was one of the great dames of the country. It gave her keen satisfaction, too, to sit well forward in her opera-box—her husband always kept in the shadow—and have numerous glasses leveled at her, and know that the high-born ladies were commenting on her jewels and costly attire. Then when Gustel brought her the papers the next morning, and she read of the beauty and grace of one of Berlin's most charming women, Frau K. B. (only the initials were given), she felt her cup was overflowing.

But the great excitement of her life was the forbidden visits to Frau Milcke, where she met her old comrade. After a time, when Kathi had gained confidence, and the tête-à-tête with Victoria grew monotonous, other friends out of her old life came to make merry with her, at her expense. She ordered her former landlady to provide dainty little lunches, and there was much eating and drinking, much gossiping and laughing, in the little room in which she had formerly lodged.

Frederick proved to be a trustworthy coachman, who could be relied upon to account for his time, if too closely questioned. Frederick was accumulating five-mark pieces very rapidly nowadays.

One day Fräulein Levini was driven to the pretty little home on Hildebrandtstrasse, and even Kathi was satisfied with the gay soubrette's exclamations of surprise and delight at all she saw there. Levini was quite awed, in fact, by so much splendor.

But all these doings were kept a profound secret from Klaus. Had he known of them, he would have been deeply grieved and mortified, as well as suspicious of what might happen next. In these latter days his senses seemed blunted. His grief had dazed him, and he nursed his heavy sorrow without any thought of vindictiveness toward his wife. He became a fatalist, and brooded continually, without trying to reason out the past, or solve any riddles for the future.

Kathi was not bad, he often declared to himself, nor implacable—she was as she had ever been; and here lay the sting. His imagination had run away from him, and he had judged her something entirely different. Her charms had not faded; her manner, her speech, even her captivating voice, were all the same. He alone was the guilty one! He alone must bear the punish-

ment! He had hurried her into this marriage, for which she, with more acumen than he, had shown no undue desire; and now, when it was months too late, he had discovered with what manner of woman he was mated for life.

Added to this old guilt was a new one creeping upon him more strongly each day. He longed for release from this unharmonious union as eagerly in the early days of February as he had desired the consummation of his marriage in the August sunshine.

Then, again, he would quell all rising hopes, which must ever be strangers to him now, and ask himself what he had left undone, or what he should do, to bring about a happier state of feeling between himself and his wife. But Kathi was contented, well contented, to judge from her glowing face and *insouciant* manner; she wanted nothing further, nothing better. In her life there was no need of a husband's love—his purse was enough; and, with a bitter sigh, Klaus would abandon all plans of trying to win her love. Poor little Kathi, self was her love, and, as he said to himself over and over again, nothing could ever affect such a nature as long as her material comforts remained.

Ellen Bewer began in earnest now to make preparations for their departure. She had grown

deeply attached to her husband's country during their few months' sojourn in it, and one pretext after another was brought forward to delay their departure. Even the weather, which had been cold and blustery, served a purpose, as Ellen did not want her son to be unnecessarily exposed to sudden draughts, changes, etc. Now, however, everything was settled. Wilhelm had taken passage in a Hamburg steamer for the 15th of February, and even the unpropitious weather had put on a brighter face, as if to give them a foretaste of a German spring. The great trunks had been packed, and were already at the station. The family sat silent and sorrowful in the hotel awaiting Klaus's arrival. He was to accompany them to the station. The child alone was gay and happy, as he chased his nurse through the dismantled, comfortless rooms.

To Klaus, his brother's departure was a keen blow. He had scarcely lifted his head since he knew the date was finally settled. He and Wilhelm had picked up all the old threads, and were once more as congenial and devoted to one another as in their boyhood days. Ellen and her sister, with their warm, frank, unaffected manners, had won him, as they could not have failed to do one of his honest, straightforward character. And the boy, the dear little fellow with the Bewer eyes, had become almost as dear to his uncle as to his own father.

They all turned now from their silent gaze at the swaying lindens without when Klaus entered the room. He had a traveling-sachel in his hand.

"I have decided," he said, as he shook hands with them all, "to go to Hamburg with you, and see you off to-morrow."

His brother gave a shout of joy, as he slapped him heavily on the shoulder.

"There is really nothing to prevent my going, and I can be back to-morrow night.

The six left for Hamburg at 4 o'clock. Their departure was watched by an observant young woman who sat in the third-class waiting-room.

The announcement that Klaus had decided to accompany his brother to Hamburg was a joyful surprise to Kathi. It had been a problem to her, for the past fourteen days, how she could elude her husband's notice on the evening of the 14th. On that evening Victoria Levini was to be given a benefit, and Kathi had an irresistible longing to go to the Walhalla once more, on that auspicious occasion, after seven months' absence, to witness her friend's triumph.

Once she had determined to tell her husband the truth and beg him to take her for that one occasion. Then she thought it over, and feeling assured that he would deny her request, concluded to wait, and, as she expressed it, see "if something would not turn up."

Well, something had turned up, and very opportunely, too. She could go in secrecy now. The added flavor of stolen fruit was the greatest charm of all.

As soon as Klaus had driven away she rang for Gustel.

"Quick, get me the *Fremdenblatt*."

She looked eagerly down the amusement column to see whether Arnold Specht, who was engaged at the Residenz Theater for the season, was free for that night, and whether or not Leo Schneider was free also.

Fortune was in her favor. Herr Specht was not in the cast for that evening, and Leo played an important part.

"Find out when the next train leaves for Hamburg. There's a time-table in the drawer in Herr Bewer's study-table, I think."

She wrote a note to Arnold Specht to keep himself unengaged for that evening, and meet her at the corner of Charlotte and Besselstrassen at 8 o'clock. He need fear nothing disagreeable, she added.

Just as she finished, Gustel returned with the announcement that a train left for Hamburg at 4 o'clock.

"And it's 3 now. Well, there's time enough, if you pay attention to me. I'm not quite easy about this trip to Hamburg. 'There's

many a slip,' you know. Get a thick veil and put it over your hat. Take one of mine if you haven't any. Take a first-class drosky and drive at once to the Hamburg station; keep yourself in the background and wait until the 4 o'clock train starts. Watch carefully. If your master does not go, come back here; but if he does, drive at once to Dressel's and see Ned. Ask him if Herr Specht comes there regularly; if so, leave this note for him; if not, find out where he does live, and take the note there. You understand? Then go to Schmidt's and buy a bouquet for 20 marks, and then to the Walhalla and engage an orchestra-box, either right or left. Then come back here. Here are 60 marks for the drosky, the flowers, and the box. Whatever is over you can keep. If you hurry and manage everything satisfactorily I'll give you 20 marks besides."

Gustel returned about half-past 5.

The master had gone; she saw him seated in the train. She found that by waiting ten minutes at Dressel's she would be apt to meet Herr Specht, and she had been able, by so waiting, to deliver the note in person. He had sent word in reply, that he was subject to the "gnädige Frau's" orders. She bought the flowers, and the ticket for a box on the left.

At 8 o'clock a drosky drew up to the corner of Besselstrasse. A minute later a tall figure, envel-

oped in a long ulster and storm-hat, sauntered along the street, and after throwing a hasty glance into the carriage, stepped in and closed the door.

Arnold attempted to draw Kathi in his arms at once, but she drew back quite determinedly.

"Now we must not have any nonsense, Herr Specht," she said earnestly. "I shall be very angry if you do not behave yourself."

"Nonsense?" he questioned, in his soft, well-modulated voice. "Nonsense! When you know how I love you. You send for me—I come—is that nonsense? Why did you send for me, you siren?"

"Because I must have an escort. We are going to the Walhalla; the coachman is stopping now. Here is the ticket for the box; and take my bouquet, please. Now do be circumspect!"

Arnold was a little puzzled at his fair companion, who, closely enveloped in veils and wraps, led the way swiftly to the box she knew so well. When she entered it she took a seat in the background, where she could not be seen and where she could see but little.

Arnold tried the second time to embrace her, but she was as determined as before.

"Do sit still and amuse me. But behave yourself, or, I give my word, I'll tell my husband."

These words had their effect, and there was no alternative left but for the comedian to play the

deeply injured. To Kathi it mattered little what he did.

But the time passed wearily for them both. When Arnold felt he could stand it no longer, he said:

"My dear madam, how much longer must we remain in this stifling box, where we can see literally nothing, and hear little but the toot of the trombone. It is unreasonable to stay shut up this way. Hadn't we better go some place else and find some amusement?"

"I thought, myself, it would be a great deal livelier. You are quite right; it is very stupid. When one takes no part in a performance, how different it seems. But I have to stay to see Levini; that's what I came for, you know. You must throw her this bouquet."

"I?" said Specht, as though that were too much. "Ask what you will—I am your slave; but throw a bouquet—never!"

A profound gesture of abhorrence accompanied this speech.

"Well, we can take it to her behind the scenes, then we'll be done with it; and she will see that I remembered her. After we have done that, we can go."

Arnold was well content with this modification of the programme. They rose and left the box. The corridors were empty; only a buffoon, off

duty for the present, stood near one of the wings.

Kathi hastened along the well-known way, and Arnold followed with the bouquet; as she crossed behind the stage, the players noticed with what assurance she walked, as if very sure of her way, and stood aside for her.

Kathi and Arnold mounted the steep familiar steps, and Kathi knocked, as the manager had done last August, on the dressing-room door.

"Come in!" in Victoria Levini's voice.

"Can I bring a gentleman with me?"

"Yes; we are all ready." It was another voice which spoke now.

"Why, Kathi, surely it is not you in the flesh!" was her friend's astonished exclamation. "This is very kind of you. You prove you are indeed a true friend!"

"I have brought a distinguished visitor to you on your benefit night—I see you do not know him. Herr Arnold Specht, my friend, Tori Levini."

"I am delighted to meet one whose name is so renowned in the profession," answered the soubrette, smiling, with a low bow.

"Thanks!" sighed Arnold, apparently quite overwhelmed.

"And how was it possible for you to—"

"It's a long and gruesome tale," answered Kathi, laughing.

Then the two friends chatted and whispered and giggled together for several minutes.

Not far from them sat a pale, freckle-faced girl, who tapped on the floor impatiently with her foot, and drummed on the table with her long, thin fingers. At last she said, sharply and sneeringly:

"So you do not care even to bid me good-evening, it seems, although you have intruded upon my privacy, and brought with you a strange gentleman whom you have not yet presented to me."

"What do you want?" asked Kathi, with an indifference which made the blonde furious.

"Those who look at you won't be readily duped. They see before them a woman who deceives her husband; who has run away from him in order to come to the Walhalla, and with her latest lover, too. You understand me, Kathi? Don't try to ride the high horse with me, for you'll fail every time. I've known you long enough, remember! You don't impose on me because of the big diamonds in your ears. I remember the time when you ran about the streets of Klausenburg with no shoes at all, to speak of, on your feet. And I could tell other things still more interesting, if I saw fit. So don't hold your nose so high in the air, you dear creature."

Kathi listened to this with a smile. When the woman stopped, she responded promptly:

"So this is blonde Toni! I recognize you now for the first time. It gives me great pleasure to see you again, I can assure you. I am flattered to learn you paid such close attention to me and my shoes at Klausenburg, and here also. How well those blue satin boots, with the high red heels, suit you, by the way. I left them here when I shook off the dust of the place, if I am not mistaken. I am rejoiced that you are able to make use of my cast-off shoes. I might send you a few more pairs, if you want them. Or would you rather I spoke a good word to Prince Strusa, whom I cast off also. He would get you a new pair if I asked him."

Toni was beside herself with anger.

"I'll pay you back—only wait!" she fairly shouted.

"But, my dear madam," interposed Arnold, in his most mournful baritone, to Kathi, "I implore you—for your own sake, for your own dignity—"

"You are right," assented Kathi, laughing; "we'll leave this idiot. And now, Victoria, good-by. I hope your evening will be a great success! We'll see one another within the next few days. Come on, Herr Specht."

She turned to go. Her pale antagonist rose and hurried toward her.

"So you think I'm an idiot, do you? You will hear from me, my lady. Those words will lie heavy on your stomach yet."

"If ever yours is empty, come to me and I'll give you something to eat! Good-by, dear Victoria," and Kathi tripped lightly off the scene. She was not specially excited. She had had a little encounter, but had held her own and was pleased to think she had come off victor. Her only regret was that Arnold Specht had been witness to such a scene.

"I should rather have had nothing to say to that creature. There is nothing to be gained by intercourse with so rude and uncultivated a woman."

"No, indeed!" answered Specht in a tone of deep conviction. "But let us drop all this. After the storm we're entitled to a glimpse of idyllic life. We must get ours now."

They were in the street by this time, and as Kathi put her foot on the carriage-step, she said calmly and coldly:

"Now I'm going home."

The drosky drew up at the corner of Hildebrandt and Thiergarden strassen and the two occupants alighted.

"Good-night, my dear Herr Specht. Many thanks for your delightful company. I prefer walking the few steps to my own door alone. Refreshing sleep and pleasant dreams." With a slight nod and wave of her hand, she turned and tripped lightly up the street toward her home.

Arnold Specht looked after her dreamily for a

minute and then, with a characteristic shrug, turned toward Dressel's.

The four at the Kronprinz Hotel at Hamburg passed a quiet evening. They could not be gay; the hour of separation was too near. The companionship of the past three months had filled the hearts of the travelers with deep sympathy for the man from whom they were so soon to part, and a tone of depression and sadness pervaded their intercourse on this their last night together.

The parting was so certain, the meeting again so questionable, that no one ventured to speak of it; they could only enjoy each other's society for the few hours which remained. They sat together until late in the night, none having the heart to suggest sleep and rest.

They met next day at 1 o'clock on the pier, and shook hands, hardly exchanging a word. The noise, bustle, and confusion consequent upon a great steamer's departure for a long voyage were going on all around them.

Klaus looked at the great ship, the deck of which was already filled with passengers, while others ran hither and thither giving final orders about their luggage, and then, turning to his brother, said in a pained tone:

"Ah, Wilhelm, if I could only go with you away from here; I long for freedom, but I must stay behind a prisoner!"

"My dear old boy, I wish you could. And now for one word, our last. Don't allow yourself to be crushed. Hold up your head like a man, and live like a man, too. Determine what is best to do; don't be driven east and west by every wind that blows. Make up your mind, and at once, and when you have come to a conclusion stick to it! Do you hear? Stick to it, and God help you!"

The signal for starting was given. The three went slowly across the narrow plank, and a minute later Wilhelm, Ellen, and Bella stood on the upper deck waving their handkerchiefs. The powerful machinery was set in motion, flags waved, friends shouted, and whistles shrieked as the steamer moved slowly and majestically from the harbor.

Klaus stood looking after it as long as he could define the contour of the three figures still waving to him from the receding ship, then he turned and went slowly back to his hotel.

Those on the departing vessel said no word to one another. But soon Bella descended to her cabin, and there her sister found her a little later, sobbing as though her heart would break.

"My poor sister," said Ellen, taking her in her arms—"my poor sister, you may show me your heart, my poor dear child!"

It was long ere Bella's sobs ceased.

CHAPTER XIII.

At half-past 10 o'clock that night Klaus alighted at his own door. He had telegraphed the hour of his arrival to his wife, and she came out to meet him with open arms.

"Has anything happened?" asked Klaus, innocently.

"Nothing that I know of," answered Kathi. "Did your people get away? I am very sorry, on your account, that they had to go, for it was a great pleasure to you to have them with you; I could see that. Your sister-in-law is a lovely woman. She wrote me such a kind letter before she left."

Klaus thanked her, with a good-natured smile, for her friendly speech.

They ate their supper together that night.

Klaus went immediately to his study, after the meal, to answer some important letters which had been lying on his desk for several days. One especially, from his lawyer, Felix Quintus, informing him of the successful termination of a long and weary lawsuit, demanded his immediate attention.

He wrote him a few lines excusing his delay, and concluded by saying that within the next few days he should do himself the honor of calling in person on the distinguished barrister.

Klaus was pleased with the business correspondence which he had carried on for some time with Herr Quintus, and had decided in his own mind that he was a man worth knowing.

Then he wrote a long letter to his business manager in Sumatra, telling him not to rush matters in the settlement of his affairs there; that there were now no cogent reasons for haste.

It was past 2 o'clock when Klaus retired. He fell at once into a deep, dreamless slumber; when he waked in the morning his head was heavy and his limbs felt like lead.

The early post brought several letters—business communications and others. One of them, blotted and ill-written, he read several times. His brows contracted; he folded the letter slowly and put it in his pocket; then he looked across the table at his wife, who sat opposite him, and said slowly:

"Were you at the Walhalla night before last?"

Kathi's face became crimson.

"No!" she said.

Klaus laid his fork on his plate and drummed on the table with his fingers, looking searchingly at her the while.

"Yes, I was there. I will not tell you a lie. But tell me who has been tattling on me?"

Klaus handed her the letter without a word.

"Blonde Toni! The wretched creature!"

The perfidy of the dancer so occupied her thoughts that she forgot for the moment the painful situation in which she was placed as regarded her husband.

Klaus knocked somewhat energetically on the table, as he said, in a slightly accentuated tone:

"You may as well understand from the first that I will not suffer you to deviate one hair's breadth from the truth. I will be very quiet, but I want the truth."

There was a note of command in the man's tone which Kathi had never heard before, which made her look at him with a hitherto unknown feeling of dread.

"Well, go on! What has happened?"

"My God, nothing at all! Nothing wrong, I swear to you. My old friend Victoria Levini had a benefit, and I took a bouquet to her dressing-room. Then I met the vile creature who has written this note to you. That is all."

"But what of your escort, to whom this letter refers? Who—"

"That is a vile slander, I swear to you! I can not make myself out worse than I am. I have done nothing but conceal a few little trifles. You

may believe me or not, as you see fit; but, though you kill me on the spot, I can but repeat the words, I have done nothing!"

"And what are these trifles which you concealed from me so carefully?"

"Only a few visits to my old friend Victoria. You debar me from all my old pleasures. Surely one can have a little variety once in awhile. But I have done nothing wrong," she repeated vehemently; "you may or may not believe me, but I am telling you the truth."

Klaus remained very quiet. He believed his wife's repeated assurances that his honor as a husband had not been sullied; but how long would this be so? He knew that chance alone, and not the moral principle of his wife, had saved him, so far, from humiliation and dishonor.

"The duck returns to water," and his wife, behind his back, had found her way to her former companions—that was all. Wilhelm had given good advice at parting. He would decide at once what to do, and he would abide by his own decision.

He rose and left the room. Kathi remained sitting where he had left her for a short time. She took up the letter and read it through a second time, then she crushed it in her hand.

"The low, miserable wretch!" she cried. "But

you have not seen the last of me yet. Wait until we meet—only wait!"

Then she rose and went thoughtfully to her room.

"I'm curious to know what he'll do now. He can not do much. I haven't committed any crime. He might turn me out. Well, I would not have to stay in the streets. I'd get an engagement at once, and Toni would lose hers in a week, for I can sing and dance much better than she. I wouldn't regard that as any great misfortune. It would be gayer than this stupid life here. Let him do what he chooses; it's all one to me."

At 1 o'clock that day Klaus Bewer sent his card into the private office of his attorney, Felix Quintus. He was admitted at once.

Klaus was surprised upon entering the eminent lawyer's room to see that the man who rose to receive him was of so youthful an appearance. The lawyer had a round, jovial face, upon which he wore neither beard nor mustache. At a first glance he might have been taken for an actor, or a priest who had just taken orders; but a longer look at the tall, graceful man assured one that he had outlived his boyhood's years. A life a little too convivial, perhaps, had brought tinges of gray into the brown curly hair, and deep lines in the high, broad forehead, over his large, intelligent blue eyes, gave evidence of hard work with no

intervals for rest. A pair of gold-rimmed eye-glasses rested upon his nose. His complexion was fresh and clear; his well-formed mouth and thin lips showed great decision of character. He was well, even elegantly dressed, perhaps a little too youthfully for his years.

Felix Quintus was an acknowledged favorite in all circles of Berlin society. He was deferential and obliging to the ladies, and a great blessing to the men, for he brought humor and life into every room he entered. He had a cultivated palate, and never smoked any but the best cigars, and was a master hand at all social games; skittles, billiards, quinze, bezique, piquet, chess—it mattered not what, he was an adept at them all. He never gambled, at least not to any extent, and never gave himself airs of superiority over the uninitiated. It was a riddle to his friends how he did it all. He was seen everywhere; never refused an invitation, even to the most modest dinner, and never missed a club night. Yet, with it all, he had made unheard-of strides in his profession, and never neglected the minutest detail of his enormous practice.

"I've just this moment finished reading your letter, Herr Bewer," he said pleasantly, extending his hand to the visitor. "I did not think I should see you so soon."

"I have delayed too long already in tendering

my thanks for the great service you have done me," said Klaus, shaking the extended hand cordially.

"Take this chair. Won't you smoke? Are you a connoisseur? I have a little box here of choice cigars such as can not be bought now, positively can not be bought. There are no more in the market."

He had taken a small box from the table while speaking, and offered it to Klaus.

The two men lit their cigars and smoked in silence for a minute.

"I have come to you on another mission than that of mere thanks," began Klaus. "I wish to consult with you, to ask your advice and take advantage of your experience in a matter which is of great import to me."

"I am at your service," answered the lawyer politely.

"Can you give me your time to-day, now, and shall we be undisturbed?"

"I will give orders that we shall not be interrupted."

Quintus rang a bell, and upon the entrance of a clerk, gave orders that he was not to be disturbed. If anyone came on important business, the managing clerk was to see him.

The clerk took the liberty of explaining that Baron Seckt had an appointment at 2.

"Yes, so he has. Tell the baron I was suddenly called away—to draw up a will—or anything else you please. I'll meet him at Poppenberg's at 6, and we can talk his business over freely at table. Now, my dear sir, I am at your service."

"I come to speak of my wife."

"Ah, yes! I hear she is a charming lady. I had the pleasure of seeing her recently at the opera with you. I have seldom seen so lovely a woman. When I heard her name and found she was your wife, I decided at once that I would request an introduction at the earliest opportunity. But pardon this digression. In what way can I serve your wife?"

"I am on the point of separating from her."

The lawyer looked serious at once, and said quietly, with a certain warmth:

"Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it."

"I have not determined upon this course without serious thought. I have no one to blame but myself, no word of reproach for my wife. There stands between us an irreconcilable antagonism, a total difference of character and of conception. There can be no union of souls, either now or later. Our life together is merely a vexation to us both; we shall be happier apart. It is but right that this decaying bond should be loosened. As I have said to you, my wife has done nothing

for which she should be punished, and I wish her to be as comfortable as may be under the terms of our separation. I wish her to continue living in the same manner in which she has done since our marriage. She has no business knowledge whatever, and it is in regard to this, my dear sir, that I wish your advice and assistance."

"You've made up your mind? Well, my dear sir, I have no experience to fall back upon to meet the conditions of your especial case. I can but advise you to the best of my ability without any examples of a like nature to guide me. Are there any children by this marriage?"

"No; we were only married the first of last September."

"How old is your wife, may I ask?"

"She'll be twenty-one next June."

"You speak of living apart. Do you mean by that a legal separation?"

"I shall leave that to my wife. All I want is the separation."

"And will your wife agree to this without opposition?"

"I believe she will. I have decided to leave her, however, even against her will."

"She'll make the thing as easy as possible for us, you think?"

"As easy as possible, I believe."

"That's good; for legally there's nothing to

work on at present. There's no point in delay. The simplest and most direct is the *desertio malitiosa*, or willful desertion. You go at once to your wife when you leave here, and tell her you are going away from her forever—will never live with her again. I'd advise you to take a trip to Nice; it's delightful at this season of the year."

"I am going much farther than that," answered Klaus quietly.

"Ah, yes! Well, I have just explained to you the simplest way out of the trouble. If your wife wants an absolute divorce, let her come to me. I will send a demand to you at once to come and live with her again; you will answer in few words that you'll do nothing of the sort. Then there is nothing left for her but to apply for her divorce on the ground of desertion, and you remain the guilty party. These things take time, so the sooner she begins her suit, if she is anxious to be free, the better. In the meantime we must consider her support. I know nothing about your financial condition, whether you are rich or poor. As soon as I know that, we can determine in a few words what pecuniary arrangements to make for Frau Bewer."

"I have a house in Hildebrandtstrasse, free of all incumbrance, which I shall leave to my wife —furnished as it is, together with certain accessories, such as carriage, horses, etc. I estimate

that she will need for household expenses and her own personal wants from 60,000 to 65,000 marks a year. For that purpose I shall deposit enough capital in the Imperial Bank to yield a yearly income of 75,000 marks, and that income will be transferred to my wife. As I consider her a bad financier and housekeeper, I want the principal so placed as to make it impossible for her to touch it."

"That's certainly liberal enough for anyone. Your arrangements for her comfort are those of a gentleman. You make your wife a rich woman, and that is all you can do. But after you are separated from her, remember one thing, you are under no obligations, indeed you have neither the power nor the right to remonstrate with her concerning any possible whims, or crotchets, or extravagances. They will no longer be your care —though they may concern others who are nearer to her. For you can rest assured that a young, handsome, rich woman will not mourn in solitude; she will have many admirers. You can see that for yourself. I shall be obliged to you, also, if you will attend to all matters connected with the transfer of the house and the settlement of the annuity in the Imperial Bank. In the meantime, open a monthly credit with some banker in the city here for your wife while she still bears your name. I suppose the funds which you will

deposit in the Imperial Bank will not be at the disposal of Frau Bewer until after the divorce. You bring me all the necessary documents, and say to your wife that I'm entirely at her service, then there will be nothing to detain you longer in Berlin—everything's all right now. I'm only sorry our acquaintance will be of such short duration. I'd like to have you dine with me at Poppenberg's at 6 o'clock."

"I thank you, Herr Quintus. To-morrow at this hour—if it be convenient for you—I will do myself the honor of calling again, and will bring with me such papers as are necessary, and get from you any suggestions you may have to make."

"Very good! Won't you take another cigar?"

"No more, I thank you, Herr Counselor. Good-morning."

"Good-morning."

Klaus retraced his steps to his own house. He found his wife in her dressing-room with her dressmaker, who had just brought home some new garment, with which Kathi was well pleased.

"When you are at leisure, please come into the drawing-room."

"I am at leisure now."

She threw a glance into the mirror; then, excusing herself to the woman, followed her husband. When she reached the drawing-room, she

took her position behind a high-backed easy-chair, leaning her arms carelessly across it. Drooping her head, like a defendant in the presence of her accuser, she waited to hear what her husband had to say; she knew well that it was something of importance.

"Kathi," said Klaus, standing opposite to her, "Kathi, you and I must part."

Kathi's face became ashy pale. Her lips trembled. She did not speak, because she had no power to do so.

The strong man's voice trembled as he continued:

"For a time, at least. As I have explained to you before, my business in Sumatra has suffered since my absence, and to-day I resolved to return to that island. Of course, I could not go on such a journey without making all necessary arrangements for your comfort. The distance is great, and one never knows what may happen. I may never return. You will be left perfectly independent, so that my absence need make no difference in your mode of living; and you will be equally well provided for in the case of my dying suddenly. I have intrusted all my business arrangements in your behalf to my attorney, Herr Felix Quintus; a most excellent man, upon whom you can always rely. He is at your service for the future, if you wish for advice or instruc-

tion. I have left you this house, just as it is; the deeds will be transferred to you before I leave Berlin. I shall wish you to keep it up as you have done so far, and I leave you an income sufficient for that purpose. I shall not leave Europe for seven or eight weeks, as it will require all that time to consummate my plans, but I shall leave this house a week from this day. If you wish me to do anything for you, if I can gratify any unfulfilled desire before I go, I beg you to let me know. As I have before said, when I am gone, Herr Quintus will be at your service. I desire nothing further from you than that you do your duty, and remember what you owe to the man whose name you bear—that is, so long as you bear it. I can but beg you to be prudent and chaste. I am going on a long journey, a very long journey. If you find the time drag and you wish your entire freedom, it will be all the better and easier for you if you can prove your life has been above reproach. And now, good-by, Kathi. We shall see little of one another these last few days, for I shall have many claims upon my time. Good-by, Kathi."

Kathi stood as one turned to stone; her hands had not moved from their resting-place across the chair-back. As her husband spoke the last words, the tears trickled down her cheeks and she sobbed aloud.

"I understand it all! But I have done nothing, I have done nothing."

She broke into sobs again.

"You have done nothing. I do not accuse you of doing anything. Only it is better so; Kathi, believe me, it is better so. Do not make our parting hard. I could say much more to you, but you would hardly comprehend me. You have not been happy. It is better so."

"That you should believe such a low creature," said Kathi, between her sobs; "that is what vexes me."

"You really do not understand me," said Klaus good-naturedly. "I believe what you told me; but it is better so."

He turned slowly away and went to his room. He locked himself in, and did not open the door again until far into the night.

Kathi sobbed for a time in a comfortable corner of the sofa. At last she dried her red eyes, and exclaimed:

"Well, I don't care!"

The French steamer outward bound from Marseilles had left the harbor of the city about five hours before.

It was the same ship which in midsummer of the previous year had brought the "King of Sumatra" across the ocean on his homeward

journey. Now the pilot, who heeded little who came or went, turned her face again toward the east.

The sun was yet high in the clear blue May sky, and a few airy, fleecy clouds sailed near the horizon. The sea was calm and still.

Klaus stood near the wheel-house and gazed into the deep green water, watching the dashing waves as the revolving paddles churned them into foam. He leaned upon the rail until he grew dizzy with watching the rush of the swift-passing water and his ear grew heavy with the monotonous crash of the machinery.

The parting from Kathi had been harder, much harder, than he had thought.

"It is better so!" he had repeated over and over again. "It must be!"

But nothing could blind him to the truth that he was leaving the woman whom he had loved more than all else on earth.

The engine panted and hammered and the wheels crashed through the beating waves. Klaus still stood looking down into the rushing water. Out of all the noise and turmoil came, soft and low, a simple melody which the lonely man hummed with closed lips. It was a homely, touching air, a song which that last sad Christmas-night had rung in his ears, and even while he slept had been with

him in his dreams—a ballad, the words of which he then had tried in vain to seize.

Now he remembered them, and smiled sadly as the words came back to him. It was the song which he had heard Kathi sing the first night he ever saw her; he sang it over softly to himself now:

"Forsaken, forsaken,
Forsaken am I.
Like a flower, sear and withered,
Deserted I lie."

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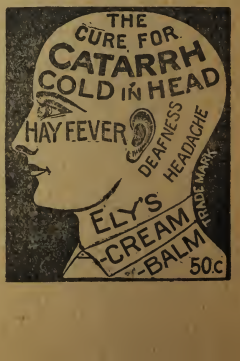

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